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JOY AND GYPSY JOE

BY
DOROTHY WHITEHILL

AUTHOR OF
"Joy and Pam," The "Polly" Series, Etc.



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JOY AND GYPSY JOE

CHAPTER I

TWO BUNNIES

RADIANT gold sunshine flooded the lawns and terraces of the old Payton house on a mild May morning; but in the somber house itself the sunshine was pale and dusty. The stiff rooms were cold with the coldness of an uninhabited house. Even the nursery was bleak and immaculate.

Joy Payton stood in her starched white petticoats, one shoe off and one shoe on, in the middle of the room. The foot that was unshod was wriggling with impishness.

"No, Jane," she said, with decision, "I won't be good, and I won't keep still, and I won't let you put my shoe on unless you promise, cross your heart, that you won't wash my ears."

"Now Miss Joy, whatever would your mother say if she was to hear you? Of course you'll have your ears washed, you that's going to have your picture painted," and Jane

strove to quiet the wriggling foot; but she did not count on the eel-like propensities of Joy.

"Ears don't show in a picture, Jane; how could they," and she slipped away to crawl under the table. "Now come and get me," she challenged.

Jane was large and portly and very short of breath, but she tried, and finally managed to haul the child out by an arm.

"Whatever would your mother say?" she repeated.

Joy stopped wriggling.

"I don't know," she said, solemnly; then after a pause for reflection, during which she permitted her foot to slide unresisting into her shoe, she asked: "Jane, is my mother such a dreadful person?"

Jane was taken aback.

"Your mother a dreadful person, whoever heard the like? Your mother's one of the grandest women that iver lived, now mark that."

"But is she dreadful?" persisted Joy.

Jane did not understand the depth of the thought so she scolded for lack of an intelligent reply.

"Miss Joy, don't you iver let me hear you

using such a bad word again," and she frowned in reproof.

Joy sighed. She knew so little about her mother, and she wanted to know so much.

She knew that when she was little her mother had gone to Europe with her father on some military mission, leaving Joy in the care of the devoted Jane. She knew, too, that her father had been taken ill there because everybody spoke of him as the "poor man" and she knew that he had died. Jane had even tried to make her properly sorry.

Now her mother was coming home, and Joy was full of a lively curiosity. It was no wonder she thought her mother must be dreadful, for she had been held up to her as a paragon of virtue and severity all her small life.

"I'll just have to wait and find out," she decided, within herself. She sighed again and permitted Jane to wash the much discussed ears without a murmur.

The long ride into town beside Jane was always exciting, there was so much to see. To-day Joy speculated on having her picture painted. She was just a tiny bit afraid of Miss Strong, the tall masculine woman who had descended upon the quiet household and

demanded to see Flora Mannering's child. Mrs. Payton had been a Mannering.

Her first words of greeting after she had looked hard at the dark-eyed, dark-haired mite before her had been:

"I'll paint her; she's not pretty but she's quaint."

There had followed numbers of sittings, and each one had been a torture, for she had to sit still for a long long time with two delectable bunny rabbits, and never even speak to them, nor stroke their soft pink ears. After each sitting they had been ruthlessly put back in a big box, and Joy had been whisked away by Jane.

Miss Strong said she was an excellent model, which was small comfort to a six-year-old girl.

To-day, however, things were different. The painting was finished, and Miss Strong asked if she would not like the bunnies. Joy looked at Jane appealingly and Jane responded with a good-natured laugh.

"And I don't see why not," she said, jovially; "two rabbits can't be much of a bother, and when they get too big we can eat them."

Joy's eyes grew round with terror, but she hugged the bunnies up to her, and said nothing. By the time the two lively rabbits

had jumped all over the limousine, Jane had repented of her bargain, and was ready to eat them for dinner. Joy felt otherwise. She had never had a dog nor a cat; these furry little fellows were her first pets, and she loved them accordingly.

"Take the pesky things out to the barn, and tell Patrick to give you a box for them," Jane commanded on reaching home. "I've a good mind to have them killed, I have."

But Joy had other plans. She had heard the dreadful word "eat," and her one thought was to save her darlings from any such dismal end.

"I'll take them to the Colonel's for safe keeping," she said, and started off across the soft velvety lawn.

It was of course way out of bounds, and strictly against orders to go a step farther than the hawthorn bushes; but to-day Joy felt rebellious. She ventured past the forbidden boundary line and continued on bravely to the pond. This was new and unexplored territory, so she stopped for a moment. Her small handkerchief dropped to the ground at this important spot.

A roadway, no more than a lane, that ran parallel to the pathway along which Joy was

tripping, beckoned to her with promise of new adventure. She slipped under the fence, and faced the great outside world for the first time alone.

Somewhere in all this bewildering countryside lived the Colonel. Joy had been at his house for tea with Jane on the important event of her birthday. The Colonel was a friend of her father's, and had felt a momentary touch of tenderness for the child at his death. Since then the two had been great friends.

How to find this nice man was Joy's thought as she padded on down the old road.

The Spring leaves on the slender trees were a pale green, and the sun filtered through them easily to lie in broad splotches on the warm red of the earth. Joy played a game of stepping only on the shadows. A bird called from a tree, and she stopped to listen. Her arm loosened its hold and one of the bunnies escaped. Joy clutched the other one tighter and hurried in pursuit. The bird's call grew louder.

At a bend of the road she came upon a boy sitting on the low stone wall. He was playing a fiddle. He was dressed in corduroy with a broad red sash around his waist. He was about eight years old and his skin was dark,

much darker than Joy's own, and his hair was brown. With his violin he was imitating the bird's call. His eyes flooded with anger at the interruption.

"You startle my birds; go away, *Gajo*" (a term used by a gypsy to denote anyone not of their kind).

"I won't go away" Joy replied, "I'm looking for my bunny."

The boy stared at her in surprise. The Romany girls of his tribe ran away at his slightest word.

"Here," Joy further astonished him by thrusting the remaining bunny into his arms; "you hold this one while I chase the other."

It is hard work in patent leather slippers to catch a wily rabbit, and Joy in sight of victory more than once failed each time. The boy watched her indolently, but at last he could stand it no longer.

"Here, clumsy," he shouted, and giving the rabbit back to Joy he was off across the field; so fleet of foot was he that before the animal could scamper away he had it firmly by the ears.

"Oh! you'll hurt it!" cried Joy.

"No, you hurt it holding it that way.

Rabbits are meant to be held by their ears. See, he doesn't cry."

"Are you sure?" asked Joy, doubtfully.

"Of course, clumsy one. Now if you like we will play."

And play they did in the warm sunshine all through that glorious afternoon.

At last came a call from the woods and the boy jumped up.

"I'll take one of the rabbits," he said, "and you may keep the other."

"Oh! where are you going?" cried Joy; "not away from me?"

The boy nodded.

"That is my father's call, and I must hurry unless I wish a beating."

"Oh!" said Joy, who had not the slightest idea what a beating was, but sensed that it was not good. She put out two hands in an appealing little gesture; "take me, too," she begged.

The boy eyed her for a minute. She was by far the best playmate he had ever had, and he was very reluctant to leave her. Could he take her and hide her so that his father would not find her until it was too late to send her home?

He knew his father would give him almost

anything in the world he wanted, and only demanded instant obedience in return. Would he, he wondered, let him have this jolly little *Gajo* to play with.

"Come," he said, making up his mind suddenly to chance it. "Don't make such a noise," he warned more than once as Joy's boots cracked through the bracken.

Joe, for that was the boy's name, belonged to the illustrious family of Stanleys; at least the man whom he called father did.

After running for a little way, the children came to the top of a hill that commanded a view of the gypsy encampment.

This was a small tribe but recently come over from England, and not versed in the ways of the new country—traveling on the road in big, lumbering caravans, and resting in spots that most reminded them of home.

There was a cluster of orange and white tents. At the door of one sat an old gypsy with sightless eyes. Younger women were busy with preparations for the evening meal; while the little men sat at their ease, smoking their short pipes, and telling stories. Near by the horses were tethered, some blooded beasts, and some shaggy ponies.

Joe slipped behind the cluster of tents, haul-

ing Joy after him, and up into a wagon filled with quilts and bedding. Joy thrilled to the finger tips as she felt herself being hoisted in.

Then Joe, warning her to be very quiet, went off in search of Mother Ia.

CHAPTER II

JOY AND JOE

MOTHER IA was still sitting before her tent, a half-finished basket at her feet. Joe sidled up to her, and she put a large bony hand on his head as he dropped to his knees.

"What ails my pretty lamb?" she asked, "something gone amiss? Tell me all."

Gypsies the world over love little children, and are very good to them in their own rough way.

Mother Ia had had eleven children of her own, but had buried most of them, and the rest were scattered. Joe reminded her of her favorite son, and he knew that if he tried coaxing he could get almost anything that he asked from the old woman.

"Mother Ia," he said, this time using the direct assault; "I've stolen a pretty little *Gajo* girl to play with. Help me hide her so my father won't find her till we are gone from here."

Mother Ia's hands waved in despair.

"A *Gajo!*" she exclaimed, and her sightless eyes turned toward the boy; "but we will be in trouble with the police; you can't steal a *Gajo*."

"But please, please listen; she wanted to come. Let her stay. Pretend she is your little girl, and tell my father you will take care of her, and let her sleep in the supply wagon with you."

Mother Ia still wrung her hands, but her lips were moving. "I knew we did wrong that bad day and now he has got himself a *Gajo* to play with. Leave me, child, and send Liubo, your father."

It is not the way of gypsy women to send for the men of the family, but rather to go themselves; but Mother Ia was old, and blind, and in her day had been the best fortune teller in England. She could still read the future at times, or at least she had foretold some amazing things, so that all the tribe united in honoring her.

Liubo was her first cousin's eldest son. Joe found him seated beside the horses. His flowing hair was black, and coarse, while his side whiskers gave him a ferocious look that his full red lips, curving the kindly mouth, denied.

There was no resemblance between him and Joe.

"Well, little son," he said fondly, "where have you been this day—talking to the birds?"

Joe laughed nervously, and pulled away from the protecting arm. "Go and talk to Mother Ia," he said, "she wants you."

"What's this?" Liubo's brow clouded "have you been into some deviltry, boy? and are you hiding behind Mother Ia's petticoats?"

Joe stammered, and hurried back to the old women. Liubo followed at a leisurely pace.

"What has the boy done now?" he demanded, as he squatted on the ground, too lazy to stand.

Mother Ia began wringing her hands. "I said we did wrong, and I knew we did wrong; the boy has found him a *Gajo* playmate, and wants us to steal her."

"Not steal her," Joe protested, "she wanted to come, she cried to come, though she is no cry baby."

"Wouldn't a playfellow of your own tribe suit you, that you must be getting us into trouble with the foreign police who do not know us?" his father asked. "Where is this

stranger child? I say you must send her home at once."

"And have the police arrest us as kidnapers," Mother Ia reminded him; "your wits wander."

Liubo paused. He was chief of his tribe, but he did not know the customs of the police in this new country. That they had loud voices he knew, and that they had a way of ordering the gypsies away from the most desirable locations he was also aware; he even had a suspicion that they would never give him time to explain, if a strange child were found in one of their wagons.

Joe led the way to the spot where he had left Joy. His eyes were streaming with tears. They came to the flap of the wagon, and he called "Joy" very softly.

There was no answer.

"But I left her here," he said, wonderingly, and called again.

Liubo pulled out the bedding that was in the wagon but there was no *Gajo* child to be found.

"She ran home," he said, relief in his tones. "Now boy, never do such a thing again," and he struck Joe to emphasize the point.

Joe fled to the outskirts of the camp, and

sobbed his heart out for his lost companion. The incident was soon forgotten by Liubo, and Mother Ia kept her own council. Every once in a while she would wave her old hands as if protesting, and mumble to herself.

There was an event of great importance that filled the minds of the men and women of the tribe. Persa, a comely Romany maid, was asked in marriage by a man she did not love, and the camp was divided against itself about the matter.

Some, mostly the men, thought she should marry him, and so bring wealth (her father asked two thousand dollars for her) to the tribe, who were very poor, and the protection of a stronger tribe. The rest, mostly the women, thought she would be wrong to marry a man she disliked. Gypsies should love, they argued, and even if he is wealthy, it would be foolish to wed with a man you did not love.

Curiously enough Liubo thought with the women on this subject. He had always been fond of Persa, who was the youngest daughter of his brother, and the fact that he had loved his wife, who had died the year before, made him lenient to the vagaries of the young girl.

Persa was very beautiful. She had soft

black hair that she wore in long braids twined with red ribbon; and she had many strings of beads hung about her graceful neck. Besides, there was a chain of gold coins; this was her dowry.

This very night the stranger from the other tribe, who were camping near the town, was coming over to see Persa's father, and all the camp was agog—all save Persa, who sat in her tent that she shared with her numerous family, and cried.

The reason of her tears was not the stranger who was coming to ask for her hand, but George, a Rom of her own tribe, whom she secretly loved.

George was without a cent. He spent his happy, care-free life among the horses, and in lazy and infrequent trading. The automobile was fast spoiling the horse trade and he made but a scant livelihood, but he was happy—happy and fascinating, and Persa loved him; but the fathers on both sides frowned at the match, and would have none of it.

So Persa cried until her pretty eyes were red, and George was less gentle with the horses.

Liubo forgot Joe in his present worries. He did not want to offend the mightier tribe. He

was a peace-loving man, and wanted above all security for his own people; but next to his heart was the thought of poor Persa, and he hardly knew what to do. Perhaps, however, he could temporize and gain time.

A loud and arrogant blast of an automobile horn brought him smartly out of his reverie. The stranger had come. Harry Yano was a tall, dashing gypsy, with fiery eyes, and a cruel mouth. He was very graceful when he walked, but it was noticeable that all the children and dogs ran away from him as he left his big expensive car, and strode into the clearing.

He came straight to Liubo and offered him five thousand dollars for Persa. Persa's old father heard the offer and hopped about like a monkey in his joy. He had a large family, and this was fortune indeed.

"She is yours," he said, bowing low, "take her and cherish her; we shall give her the best of weddings."

"Where is she?" demanded Harry; but Persa was not to be found.

"She is a little shy," said the old man, ingratiatingly; "do not fear, she will be here for the wedding."

Harry had to be content with that, and soon

he was off in his new car, a pleased smile on his handsome face.

It was decided that it was best to move on the next day to a place nearer town, for the wedding, in the first place, and in the second it seemed well to leave the neighborhood of Joe's little *Gajo*.

After the hum of excitement that followed Harry's going the camp gradually quieted down—all but Mother Ia who sat up all night, every now and then waving her arms about, and swaying her body back and forth in rhythmic time.

She did not go near the wagon in which she usually slept in solitary state.

Early the next morning the camp broke up with all the lazy bustle attendant upon gypsy movings the world over.

Persa and Joe climbed into the seat beside Mother Ia in the supply wagon, and George walked dismally beside the horses that drew it.

They wended their way up the brow of the hill and were just dipping into the next valley when a sleepy head pushed its way up out of a nest of quilts and peered out. Held close to her face were two bedraggled bunnies.

Joy was "off with the raggle-taggle gypsies, O!"

CHAPTER III

THE GYPSIES

EVERYTHING was new and strange to Joy, but having been born with the taste for adventure in her blood she thoroughly enjoyed this new sensation for a few minutes; then came the pangs of an empty "tummy."

"I'm hungry," she said, aloud, and Mother Ia and Persa jumped; but Joe at the first sound of that little voice dived into the wagon and came back dragging Joy after him.

Persa looked at the child, and then hugged her. Ia started to wail out threats, and fears of police torture, felt Joy's small hand on her cheek, and stopped.

"She looks like one of us," she said, slowly. "Her hair is black—"

"Brown," corrected Persa.

"And her eyes, too," went on Mother Ia, not noticing the interruption. "But you must call Liubo; this is a bad business."

George was dispatched for the chief of the

tribe and came back with Liubo who was in a very bad mood.

"What now?" he demanded, and then he saw Joy. "The *Gajo* child!"

"We found her hidden in the back of the wagon; the boy was as much surprised as either of us," Mother Ia explained; "and now there are the police to be thought of."

"This changes all our plans. We must either return the child—"

"And have ourselves put in the jail," Mother Ia pointed out.

"Silence! woman," Liubo thundered—"or take her with us, and set out for the West. I will talk to the rest about it."

The rest decided to move on at once, all except Persa's father, who did not want the wedding postponed; but the majority ruled; so they changed their course at the next cross-roads.

Meanwhile Persa and Mother Ia took off Joy's dirty white dress, and put her into a many colored calico, equally soiled. Persa removed some of her necklaces, and hung them around Joy's neck. Then they braided her hair, with red ribbons entwined, and as far as looks could make her she was a gypsy.

"Oh! I'm so hungry!" Joy said, when she

was dressed; then a sudden longing for home seized her, and she began to cry.

Mother Ia gathered her up in her arms, and crooned to her, while Joe dived into the wagon to find food.

There was only a short halt that night, as they stopped long enough to water and feed the tired horses. After a little rest they were on their way, again pointing West.

Every time they passed through a town or a village Joy was concealed. She took it as a game of hide and seek, and as Joe shared her hiding places it was a great lark.

About midday of the second day of their travels they were met by a posse of police.

"The bad luck has descended," said Liubo, "they come to look for the child."

"She is hidden," Sybil, a young gypsy woman in the second wagon told him.

"But they will search. Well, what will be, will be," and he shrugged his shoulders philosophically.

But the police were hunting a bandit and only stopped to question the gypsy chief. Before they left they had traded a good horse for a bad one, and Liubo was filled with glee.

"The little *Gajo* brings us luck; let me have

the child up here with me, so that I can question her," he said.

The order was sent back, the caravan halted, and Joy, holding tight to Joe's hand tripped up to the waiting chief.

"Well, little *Gajo* maid," he began, "tell me about yourself, and where you came from."

"I came from Jane, and oh! please don't send me home. I want to stay and play with Joe," Joy pleaded, and as the chief did not reply at once she went on tremulously: "Jane will eat my bunnies, and then I would just die."

"Who is Jane?" asked Liubo.

"My nurse," Joy told him.

"Where is your mother?" he went on.

"I don't know," she replied, frowning; "she is very far away, but she is coming home soon. I am afraid she is a dreadful lady, because Jane says she wouldn't like me when I am naughty."

"And this is *Gajo* respect for their parents," he said aghast; "when did you last see your mother?"

"I don't remember; I don't think perhaps I ever saw her," she told him seriously.

Liubo burst into roars of laughter. "So you want to stay, and be a gypsy, and play with Joe, do you?" he demanded, kindly.

"Yes, please. I love Joe best of anybody; and you won't eat my bunnies, will you?" she begged.

"Love at first sight, eh?" Liubo went on laughing; "what says my son about it?" and he looked sharply at Joe.

"Father I love her even better than my fiddle; please let her stay," Joe replied, feelingly. "Let her stay and be a Romany."

"That, little son, is not easy," Liubo replied, "once a *Gajo* always a *Gajo*. You yourself have said it; but she shall be taken into the tribe, and then we shall see. All this is true, if the police don't get us."

"I don't want to be a *Gajo*," protested Joy, tearfully, "I want to be a gypsy like Joe."

"There, there, Cricket, stop your crying, and we'll make you a gypsy like Joe," Liubo told the child, laughing.

A man had been sent forward to Harry's tribe to tell him of the change of plan; and Liubo halted his caravan to wait for him to return; but not until they were many miles distant from the quiet Jersey suburb.

It was a mild June morning, and the children, glad to get out and stretch their little

legs after the enforced ride, gamboled about like young puppies.

Joe and Joy wandered off into the woods, and had a serious talk, very serious for six and eight.

"What makes Persa so sad?" Joy began.

"She has got to marry that Harry with all his airs, and she doesn't want to," Joe replied.

"Will she go away from us?" Joy demanded; she had fallen captive to Persa's smile and did not like the idea of separation.

"Yes, she will go to Harry's tribe, and we will only see her on Feast Days, or by chance when we meet at the big camping grounds."

"I love Persa next best to you, and I wish I could keep her," Joy returned, sorrowfully.

They had wandered back along the road the caravan traversed earlier in the day, and reached the *Patteran*, a branch that marked the direction they had taken at the crossroads. Joe had a sudden impish idea.

"Let's change the *Patteran*;" he suggested: "then Harry will get lost, and not get here in time for the wedding."

"When is the wedding to be; can we go?" Joy inquired.

"To-night you can. I don't want to see Persa married to anybody but George," Joe replied, "*Gajos* don't understand these things; you can be there, and have a good time at the wedding with all the other children, but I will walk away, and not watch."

"Joe, I'm not a *Gajo*," stormed Joy, "and I won't go to the old wedding. Take me with you."

"Oh! all right," Joe agreed. He was busy with his thoughts.

He picked up the branch of the maple tree that was lying in the road, and pointed it in the other direction; then he added dismally: "that will only delay him for a few minutes. I wish I was grown up, and could think of something else to do."

"Is he coming in an automobile?" Joy asked, shyly.

"Yes in his big red one, or so I think."

"Then let's do things to the tires," Joy said, gleefully.

"What things?" Joe knew nothing of motor cars.

"Well," began Joy, doubtfully, "when we ran over some glass in the road the other day our tire blew out, and Patrick swore."

"You mean for us to put glass in Harry's way?" Joe demanded, excitedly; "if we did perhaps he would be too late for the wedding."

He knew that a gypsy can be late to almost any occasion, for their happy-go-lucky natures think nothing of delay; but he surmised that if Harry failed to arrive when the wedding preparations were made it might infuriate Persa's old father to display his villainous temper.

"But where can we find glass?" Joe spoke to the trees.

"We might break a window, or take a milk bottle from somewhere," Joy suggested. "Oh! Joe, please say it's a good plan."

Joe looked at her, and smiled, displaying his fine white teeth.

"You are a smart little *Gajo*," he teased, and Joy burst into unhappy tears.

Joe was all contrition in a second, "You mustn't cry, Joy," he begged, "please don't, you make me want to, and I vowed a vow the night you came to camp that I would never cry again."

"Then don't call me a *Gajo*," Joy replied, taking advantage of him.

"I was only teasing, but I'll not do it again if it makes you sad," Joe promised.

"Cross your heart," Joy demanded, and Joe solemnly did so.

"Now let's find a window to break, or a milk bottle to steal," Joe suggested.

"Jane told me never to steal; that's wicked," and Joy looked troubled.

"Poof! all gypsies steal," laughed Joe. "Come on, it's fun, and it's only a milk bottle."

They trotted off across fields, and forded a tiny stream on stepping-stones, until they came within sight of a farmhouse. A collie dog came out to meet them, barking.

"Oh! you lovely thing!" Joy exclaimed going towards him, but Joe held back.

"I don't like barking dogs," he said.

"I am not afraid," Joy replied, and she meant it. No animal caused in her any other feeling than affection. She held out her hand fearlessly to the big shaggy beast who stood almost as high as her shoulder.

He stopped barking, and sniffed at her suspiciously. She patted his head and talked to him much as she had talked to her rabbits. The collie wagged his tail and licked her hand. He was not a very ferocious dog at best, and evidently he loved children.

"See, he is my friend," she turned to find

Joe but he was nowhere to be seen. After a minute she saw him crawling on his hands and knees towards the back part of the frame building to a jar of preserves that stood on the window ledge.

CHAPTER IV

THE CONSPIRACY

THE preserves proved to be strawberries, and Joe decided there would be no harm in eating them; so they went off out of sight of the farmhouse, and had a royal feast. Their chins bore the evidence of their guilt, as they walked back to the road and decided just where to break the bottle.

"If he cuts his tire this side of the *Patteran*, he may think to walk in this direction for help. No, we will break it beyond the turn of this road," Joe decided.

They walked a couple of hundred feet beyond the crossroads in the direction in which the branch of the tree pointed, and scattered broken glass with praiseworthy thoroughness all over the road.

"If it only turns out right," said Joe, "if he only doesn't get to the wedding."

"I don't think he can make his car go without tires," Joy remarked, "I'm not sure, but

I don't think so. When we break ours Patrick always changes them."

Joe nodded his head, and then a lark in the sky made his attention wander.

"Come," he said, "I feel like calling to the birds with my fiddle this afternoon; and I will teach you how to whistle for them if you like. You wait here, I'll be right back," and he was off to the camp for his violin.

Joy sat on a sun-baked stone, and waited. A car came towards her and turned to the right, over the glass beyond and a moment later there were two loud reports.

The car was filled, three children and a stout mother and father. It came to a stop in the middle of the road and Joy saw to her disgust one of the boys, a thin lanky bespectacled lad in knickerbockers, come back and carefully pick up all the pieces of glass and put them neatly beside the road in a little pile.

It took the stout father a long time to change the two tires and Joe came back before he had finished, with his violin tucked under his arm.

"*Gajos!*" he murmured, "you'd best keep out of sight; I'll go and beg."

Joy did not go very far; she crouched down behind an oak tree and watched. Joe went

forward, and tucking his fiddle under his chin broke forth in a merry tune.

The children who were standing beside the car stared at him open-mouthed. When he stopped playing the gypsy song that was over a hundred years old, and was very captivating in its haunting melody, he cupped his hand, and held it out to the little group.

One of the boys doubled up his fists, "I can lick you!" he burst out.

"Roland!" exclaimed his mother, "come away from that child; you might catch something."

"Pennies," Joe said stubbornly, and paying no attention to the threat.

The father looked up with a good-natured grin. "Pretty good for a kid that age," he said and took out a nickel from his pocket.

Joe flashed a smile at him that was ample thanks.

"I could never do that," Joy said, to herself; "never."

Joe heard her, "I hate it too," he said. "I wonder why."

But the reason was never explained, for eight-years does not worry over abstract problems; and with his violin once more under his chin he was off again in a soft plaintive

air, taking care however not to go near the *Gajos*.

Joy listened to him entranced, for it was indeed a remarkable bit of art, showing that the boy was no mean performer. He had been taught by Sasha, an old man who had been quite a celebrity in his day, and known in many cities; but who had returned in his old age, as all true-blooded sons of the open spaces do, to the Gypsy Trail. He was a Russian, but he had cast in his lot with the English gypsies.

Many had been the blows that Joe had received from this temperamental master, and he had wept bitterly many times in old Mother Ia's lap; but he had always gone back for more, for nothing came before his fiddle in Joe's small affections.

To-day as Joy listened to him it seemed as though all the birds were singing to her.

"Joe," she said, when he had drawn his final bow, "what are you going to be when you grow up? I think I'll be a policeman."

"A policeman," said Joe, in horror, "I hate policemen; besides you're a girl, so you can't be one. You'd better tell fortunes. Me, I'm going to be a great violinist like Sasha, and have all the ladies throwing me kisses,"

Joe was remembering some of Sasha's tales.

"How silly," said Joy, scornfully, "I'd much rather be a policeman."

"You're a funny girl," Joe said, laughing, "come on, let's go down by the stream."

"But first," Joy reminded him, "we must wait for these people to go; they have taken up all our glass from the road."

They lingered until the family in the Ford had departed, and then Joe sprinkled the glass once more.

When they returned to camp they found all the women talking at once, and gesticulating wildly around Persa's tent. Persa was screaming and moaning, Mother Ia was beside her, wringing her old hands in sympathy, and trying to quiet her at the same time.

George over by the horses sat with his head in his hands, the tears trickling down between his fingers. The men stood off at a little distance, and eyed him askance. The messenger had returned and brought news with him that Harry was coming that night to claim his bride so that the wedding preparations must be hastened.

Liubo was angry; he cut off the heads of the unoffending daisies in his path, with the switch he was carrying.

"There is no sense in all this," he said, "stop your crying, and make ready for the wedding. I have spoken."

"I am going to tell her what we did," Joy whispered to Joe, hurrying toward the group of women; she managed to squirm through until she found herself between Persa and Mother Ia.

"Little *Gajo!* little *Gajo!*" cried Persa, "go home lest when you grow up they sell you for money."

"Hush! Persa," Joy whispered in her ear; "he won't get here to-night; we have changed the branch, and put glass in the road. If he comes, he'll be awfully late anyhow."

Persa sat up and dried her eyes.

"I see a way out," she said.

The group of women opened to let her pass through as she went to her father's tent, where the old man sat nursing his wrath at the unfilial behavior of his daughter.

"My father, how long must I wait for this Harry; it is past sundown now, and he does not come. Do the Stanleys wait for a Spanish Rom?"

"You will wait," said the old man, "until midnight."

"And after that," said Liubo, who had fol-

lowed the girl in, "if he does not come she has my permission to marry George."

A queer light shone in Persa's eyes. "Very well, my father," she said dutifully.

"Let the preparations go on," commanded Liubo, "for he will surely come," and he looked a little sorrowful.

Joy, who had been a spectator of this entire scene slipped off and over to the horse lines, where George sat, his head still bowed in grief.

"Go way, little *Gajo*," he said, "I am sad, and don't want to play."

"George, if you call me a *Gajo* I won't tell you a secret, and it's a very 'portant secret," Joy replied; then as George said nothing she added, "It's about you and Persa."

"What about us?" demanded George sullenly.

So Joy told him softly what she and Joe had done, and also about the interview in the tent.

"Little *Gajo*," said George, "if you do this for us, you shall have my protection always," and he gave her a fierce hug.

This time Joy did not mind being called a *Gajo*.

CHAPTER V

AN EVENTFUL WEDDING

THE preparations for the wedding went on in a desultory manner.

"That would be a good porker," said Sybil, looking at the fat pig that was roasting on the spit, "I wish it were for a more merry occasion."

"What does the girl want?" asked another young woman, completely covered with chains and bangles, "the man has a car, and enough money."

"That is not everything," Sybil replied; "poor child," she added under her breath.

The moon rose early that night, and sent a silvery light into the glade, making grotesque shapes of the hooded wagons, and casting a ghostlike glow over the white tents in blurred silhouette against the background of dark tree trunks.

Joy and Joe watched their opportunity, and slipped off down the road. They wanted to

see what had happened to Harry and his car.

"Tread softly, clumsy," Joe warned, as Joy's now dilapidated patent leather shoes broke the twigs under her feet.

Gypsy children run barefoot, but Persa had insisted that Joy wear her shoes.

"I can't help it," she protested, but she stepped more quietly and they reached the road almost without sound.

"Joe, hold my hand," Joy pleaded; "there is so much night around."

"Baby," said Joe, but he took the little hand and held it in his own hardened one.

Joy felt comforted.

"There is nothing to be afraid of in the night," Joe told her. "I like night much better than day. The stars are my friends, and every once in a while they wink at me."

"I hate the dark; it frightens me," Joy admitted. "Jane always put me in the closet when I was bad."

"Poof! You were never bad."

This interesting argument was cut short by the sound of loud voices. A whole bedlam seemed to be let loose, and Joy could not understand a word of what was being said.

"That is gypsy talk!" exclaimed Joe, "keep

down now out of sight. It is Harry and his friends come for the wedding.

"What do they say?" whispered Joy.

"Harry is awfully mad; he has broken three of his tires, and he is swearing very hard because it is the second time it has happened today."

"Oh goody!" exclaimed Joy.

"Be very quiet, I am going forward to hear what he has to say better," Joe warned, and he glided on like a snake in the tall grasses.

Harry's car was filled as only a gypsy's car can be filled, to overflowing; but now all the occupants were standing in the road giving advice. The women were more gaudily clothed than those of Joe's tribe. Their bangles jingled, and their high voices shrilled. Joy listened to them, and waited as patiently as she could for Joe's return. He came back finally.

"They have decided to walk forward and leave the car," he told her, "and oh! I am glad we changed the Patteran, for now they will walk in the wrong direction and walk and walk, for they never camp in the places we choose, but nearer the towns."

"Oh! goody. Let's go back to camp; it must

be nearly time for Persa to marry George," Joy said.

They trudged back along the road they had come, and found a dance in progress on their arrival. It was not a very merry dance for the participants were not happy. The music was beautiful and melancholy. The women swayed in the rhythmic ease of young birch trees in a summer wind; and the men met them like that wind, bending them back, and pulling them forward as a summer wind bends a tree it loves.

After it was over the men threw themselves on the ground, and the women went back to Persa's tent, where she sat with her eyes fixed on a cheap alarm clock. The hands pointed to a quarter to twelve.

"Where have you been?" Liubo demanded of Joe and Joy as they stepped into the light of the fire.

"Off to watch for the bridegroom," Joe replied but did not add that they had seen him. Joy giggled.

Meanwhile Persa's old father was growing angry. "So a Spanish Rom keeps us waiting, eh? Liubo, was the Patteran not plainly laid?" he demanded.

"As plain as a pike staff," replied Liubo,

"perhaps he had trouble with that devil car of his; they are not trustworthy like horses."

"Then he should have walked, nay *run* to meet his bride. What is the world coming to? Perhaps some passing traveler has changed the branch, and he is now hunting for us."

"I will send a man to see," Liubo decided; anything to quiet the old man.

He beckoned to a friend of George's, realized that he was a friend, and changed to another, who responded with a sullen grunt—he had been happy listening to the women singing, and did not want to be disturbed.

At the first mention of the Patteran Joe had scuttled off into the night, running very softly. It was was a long trip for a tired little boy, but he outdistanced his follower and arrived first at the crossroads.

He had barely time to change the branch to it's original position before he heard the man's heavy tramp. Joe ducked into the underbrush and watched to see if he noticed the car up the hill, and across from where he stood.

But the man gave another grunt which said plainly "all my energy wasted for nothing," and then returned by the road. Joe lingered, for he was very tired, and the preserves he had eaten were disagreeing with him. He

reached camp just in time to hear the report.

"All is as you left it, Liubo; now let me sit in peace," the man said, and settled down.

Persa came out of her tent and walked over to her father.

"It is two minutes to twelve," she said timidly.

"We will wait for a half hour more," replied her father, loath to see his money taking wings.

"No!" Liubo jumped to his feet, "a promise is a promise—the girl marries George. I have given my word, a gypsy's word. Get ready for the feast."

Then indeed the festivities began in real earnest. The suckling pig now crisp and brown, was taken off the spit, and ale was served in old pewter tankards. The fun was fast and furious.

Persa and George were married over the tongs and the whole camp sighed a deep sigh of relief when the curious rite was ended.

A little before daybreak a faint hail came from the road. It was rather a disheartened hello, and only Liubo heard it. He wished the others would keep still so that Harry, for he had recognized his voice, would not find them. But the dancing had reached a tempest point,

and the singing accompanied it to the wail of Sasha's violin.

Harry appeared in the opening of the enclosure. He was hot and bedraggled and looked the unwelcome guest. Persa saw him and screamed, but George held her firmly in his arms.

"You are mine, Little Flower," he whispered in her ear. "And there is none who can take you from me."

It fell to Liubo to make the required explanations and he made them in a masterly way, laying all the blame on Harry. Harry raged about the branch at the crossroads, and the broken glass, but Liubo had his proof that the Patteran was pointed in the right direction, and as for the glass he knew nothing.

After a while Harry gave up raging and he and his friends joined in the festivities, thus avoiding what might have proved a disastrous fight between the two tribes.

The explanation of it all was never made, for the only two who could have cleared up the misunderstanding were sound asleep under one of the wagons, tired out from so much walking, and suffering from very bad dreams caused by too generous a portion of roast pork and strawberry jam.

CHAPTER VI

AFTER FOUR YEARS

FOUR years is a long or short period of time depending on how you look at it.

To six-years-of-age it is both long and short; for although the years seem endless, as from Christmas to Christmas, the days slip by on hurried wings.

So it was with the four years that came between Joy's sixth and tenth birthdays. The days passed gloriously, for there was always Joe to play with, and the excitement of the restless change that is a part of gypsy life.

A short halt in some bosky dell, long hours of pleasant lazing, interspersed with the telling of fortunes to the credulous *Gajos* by the women folk; while the men bartered and sold horses up and down the great countryside which was their home.

The first winter they tried living in New York in a store with bits of calico hung up at the windows to keep out the stares of the inquisitive. But they did not like it, so they

took to their wagons again and trailed to the south, where they found again the joy of the sunshine and the stars.

Joy flourished and grew up spider-legged and thin from much running, and though her face was burned brown and her teeth flashed white in consequence, still to the despair of Persa she continued to look like a *Gajo*.

She was too young to tell fortunes, but a girl must be of use somehow and it was learned, for Joe told it with pride, that she could coax off barking dogs from the chicken coops and pigsties. This helped in their marauding, and Joy had honor in the tribe.

She was older than most girls of ten years in some ways, and younger in others. She knew the language of the birds and the flowers, could prophesy the weather to a certainty, and was by now proficient in the gypsy tongue. But she had never been to school a day in her life; did not know what it was to obey anyone but Liubo, and of course had very dreadful table manners.

A week in the early Spring the tribe camped in a spot that was strangely familiar to Joy. They had frequently revisited old camping grounds, but there was something different in this return. Joy did not place it as a spot

they had ever visited before, yet she felt she knew it; knew where the roads led to, and unbidden pictures of the inside of a house filled her mind.

She was playing with Joe in a wooded lane near a stone wall when she looked up suddenly and said to him.

"Joe why do I feel so shivery in this place?"

"I don't know," Joe replied, "what do you mean?"

"As if I had been here before," Joy replied.

"Maybe you have, I seem to remember this lane, too; perhaps we were here when we were kids." Remember Joe spoke from the lofty age of twelve.

They gave it up, and went back to camp for the fragrant stew which was their dinner.

The next day Joy, still possessed with the idea that if she went along a certain path she would see something that was familiar, started off alone in pursuit of the thought.

She knew of course that she was a *Gajo*, and had often wondered mildly about her life before she was a gypsy; but her days had been too full for her to trouble much about it. Besides she was happy where she was.

At the stone wall she found Persa decked out in all her finery.

"Well met, little one; come with me to that big house over there."

Joy nodded; she really wanted to go to the big house.

"Are you going to tell fortunes?" she asked.

"Yes, if they will pay me," Persa replied.

They walked along until they came to a pond—just as Joy knew they would—past a stable yard, and so on to the big house. It was built of gray stone, and covered with ivy.

Her heart quickened as they made their way to the servants' entrance.

"Gypsies! as I live!" exclaimed a good-natured roly-poly Irish woman who came to the door. "Is it fortunes you do be telling?" she inquired, with a beaming smile, holding out her plump hand.

Persa took it, held it first to the left side of her bosom, then to the right, last of all to the waist. Next she scrutinized it, and shook her head.

"I can tell nothing," she said, and held out her hand in the familiar way.

"Is it pennies you want?" demanded the cook, and out of her stocking she took a

wadded handkerchief, untied a corner of it and triumphantly produced a nickel. "Will that do you?" she began.

"A gypsies' palm must be crossed with silver," Persa remarked to the kitchen range.

"And sure ain't a nickel silver?" the incensed cook demanded.

"No," Persa replied, "but a dime is, and so is a quarter."

"Glory be!" the Irish woman exclaimed; "well" testily "it's worth it to know me fate. Here's the dime."

"Bridget, who are you talking to?" and a woman entered the kitchen bringing with her a scent of old lavender and an air of quiet repose. Her hair was snow white, but her face was that of woman in her thirties.

Joy looked at her, and something stirred in her heart, the woman looked at Joy hungrily.

"How old are you, my dear?" she asked, and held out her hand.

"I don't know," laughed Joy, uneasily.

"Are you a gypsy? But of course you are," and she smiled a sad little smile.

Joy wanted to contradict her, but remained strangely silent.

"Come to the living room; I want Amy to see you," the mistress of the house went on.

Joy went willingly. Through the butler's pantry, and the heavily furnished dining-room to a long, low room with a fireplace at one end.

Joy glided in gracefully . The woman who had so stirred her heart called out gayly:

"Look, Amy, I have a model for you."

But Joy did not look at Amy Strong who was seated at the other end of the room. Instead she was looking at the picture above the mantelpiece.

It was a painting of a little girl holding two bunnies!

CHAPTER VII

HOME

JOY stared at it intently; then she said aloud to herself, "But of course that's me, and I took the bunnies and one of them was named Joe and the other Persa and they had over twenty little bunnies."

"What is the child talking about?" asked the white-haired woman, "that's my little daughter up there," she said softly, "she was drowned in the lake."

But Amy Strong jumped to her feet as if struck by a bolt of lightning.

"What are you saying, child?" she demanded; "who gave you those bunnies?"

Joy turned to her, confused.

"Why you did," she cried excitedly; "and Jane said she was going to eat them, and I ran away."

"What's your name?" inquired Amy Strong breathlessly.

"Joy," Joy replied still fighting to remember.

"Joy what?"

"I don't know," she stammered.

"Flora, Flora, don't you understand? Don't you see?" Amy Strong went on, "it's your Joy come back! I always knew the handkerchief wasn't enough proof that she was drowned."

Flora Payton dropped to her knees and drew Joy into her embrace.

"Are you my little Joy? Tell me the truth," she pleaded.

"Of course she is, Flora, don't be ridiculous. I never forget a face I have once painted," Amy insisted. "Sit down, child, and tell us all about it. How did the gypsies steal you?"

Flora was weeping softly, and Joy trembled with delight at the feel of the soft arms around her, and those lips on her cheeks.

"The gypsies didn't steal me," she denied hotly, "I don't remember much about it all, but I know I met Joe, and then I hid in one of the wagons, with the bunnies; and when Liubo found me he was afraid to send me back because the police would say he had stolen me. Gypsies never steal children, and I love them. Promise me you won't hurt Liubo," she pleaded turning to Flora.

"Was he good to you, darling?" Flora asked, fearfully.

"Of course he was; all the gypsies were, specially Mother Ia and Persa. Promise me you won't hurt them."

"I promise, darling," said Flora; "but how could they have kept you from me all these years?"

"You see, I didn't know you were so nice," said Joy, simply.

"Will you come and live with me now?" Flora asked.

"Ridiculous," said Amy Strong again; "of course she'll live here; how can you dream of anything else?"

"I must be sure she wants to," Flora said, softly.

"Yes, I want to," replied Joy, "I love you, you see."

Flora Payton gave her a tender hug.

"Now let's go up and see Jane," she said, "she has a toothache and is in her room."

They went up to the third floor and knocked gently on one of the doors.

"Come in," called Jane's voice.

Joy tiptoed into the room and waited. Jane looked at her first in surprise and then as recognition dawned, the old woman

jumped from her bed and came towards her.

"Miss Joy," she screamed, and fell to her knees beside the child.

Joy put her arms around her neck, and hugged her.

"Yes Jane it's really and truly me—that is I think it is," she said, laughing excitedly.

"So the gypsies stole you," Jane said.

"They did not," Joy denied again. "I ran away with them, because you said you were going to eat my bunnies."

"Oh! lamb," was all Jane could find to say.

"And now," said Joy, "I must run down to Persa and tell her I have found my mother!"

"I'll come with you," Flora Payton said, taking her hand, and holding it fast.

Amy Strong stayed with Jane while mother and daughter went downstairs. They found Persa in the kitchen. She had wrung over a dollar and a half from the incredulous Bridget and was painting a happy future for her in consequence.

"See, Persa, this is my mother," Joy explained, still holding tightly to her mother's hand.

"So my little *Gajo* has found her own people," Persa said, sorrowfully; "and we shall see her no more in the camp."

"My dear," said Mrs. Payton, "isn't there something I can do for you? Would you like to go to school?"

"What would a rakli (gypsy girl) do at school?" laughed Persa. "No, I am happy with my George, and want nothing from a *Gajo*. I will go back to the tribe now, and tell them that our Joy has come into her own."

"We are coming with you!" Joy exclaimed, almost beside herself with excitement. "My new mother has to see Mother Ia and Liubo."

"Come, then," said Persa, doubtfully.

They walked back slowly to the gypsy camp, and found a picture very similiar to the one Joy had first gazed upon four years previously. Liubo was lounging near the horses, whittling a whistle from a piece of birch, and old Mother Ia was sitting beside her tent talking to herself.

"Here's my mother," Joy cried with a fearlessness that surprised Flora, who admitted to a feeling of uneasiness among these strange people.

Liubo jumped to his feet, and bowed low. The inevitable had occurred and he must carry

it off as best he could. He supposed there would be police.

Mrs. Payton held out her hand, smiling gently.

"How can I ever thank you for being so kind to my daughter?" she said, shyly.

Liubo bowed again, but he looked puzzled. "There is no need of thanks; we loved the child," he answered gruffly. "She stops here with you I suppose."

"Of course; she is my daughter," Flora Payton replied proudly.

"Yes, yes, I understand. *Gajo* calls to *Gajo*, but we will miss her; she has been our little flower. You would like us to move on at once?" he asked. He disliked this beautiful woman who was taking away their Joy, disliked her because he feared he would cry before her.

"No, no," Joy protested, "don't go just yet."

"My little love, it is better we go at once," Liubo replied, sorrowfully.

"Perhaps it is," Mrs. Payton answered as Mother Ia joined the group, and Joy threw her arms around her.

"So the little *Gajo* leaves us at last," the old woman said, sadly "I alone knew we were

returning to her home; but I knew it was wise, and the day had to come."

Other men and women, headed by Sybil, heard the talk, and clustered around. Flora realized that the grief they showed at being parted from Joy was genuine, and realized too with a feeling of gratitude that the years she had mourned her daughter as drowned had been happy ones for Joy. All thoughts of prosecuting the gypsies vanished from her mind.

At last the good-bys were said to every one except Joe, who was nowhere to be seen. Joy was crying, and all the gypsies—men, women, and children—were crying too. They followed them out of camp as far as the road.

"I just couldn't live any more if I thought I was never going to see you again," Joy pleaded. "Promise you will come back."

Liubo stood with bowed head, and Flora put her arm around Joy's shoulder, and led her along the road.

As they came to the stone wall Joy heard Joe's fiddle and the hardest parting of all took place in the same spot where the two had met four happy years before.

"Good-by!" said Joe, dry-eyed and fierce in his grief.

“Good-by!” said Joy, crying as though her heart would break.

“And now my darling I shall have you all to myself,” her mother whispered as they passed the pond.

Joy nodded, and tried to smile through her tears, but deep inside she knew that a tiny bit of her heart would always belong to her beloved gypsies.

CHAPTER VIII

MISS STEELE

THAT night at the dinner table, Joy had her first taste of being a *Gajo*. It was not easy, this sudden change from the happy-go-lucky life of a gypsy camp to the well-ordered conventions of a prosperous country house.

In the first place there was the question of table manners. For four years (and who remembers much that occurs before she is six), she had dipped her hand in the general dish, and had eaten as much or as little as she liked, and whenever she was hungry. There are no set meal-times in camp.

To-night it was another thing. She sat at a high table on a chair instead of on the ground, at a table whose legs had been sawed off so as to make it comfortable, and low. There was before her a glittering and mystifying array of knives, forks and spoons.

What to do with them was the question. She knew about spoons, for she had eaten the

thick soup which was Sybil's speciality, with one, and knives obviously were intended to cut with; but forks, how was she to manage them like her mother and Miss Strong.

"I guess," she said at last, "that it's not so very easy to be a true *Gajo*," and she balanced her fork on her first finger, and eyed it contemplatively.

She smiled shyly, a smile that was reflected in the great silver tray that twinkled on the sideboard, and seemed to send out reassuring rays of brightness.

"Hold it this way, darling," said Flora, tenderly.

Even the teaching of table manners to a woefully deficient daughter can be a labor of love.

"No, don't clutch it, hold it easily, and don't put it in your mouth so ferociously—it will hurt you," she went on, laughing a little.

So the lessons continued, but don't think for a moment that table manners were the only stumbling blocks. Remember, Joy had never been to a school in all her life, and could neither read nor write, although she could count. Liubo had once taught her how, but she got forty and fifty awfully mixed, and wasn't at all sure what came after eighty.

"Why, the child knows nothing!" exclaimed Miss Strong, after quizzing her the following morning, "you can't send her to school; she'd be put among the babies, and it wouldn't be fair."

"I've been thinking of that, too, and wondering what was best," Mrs. Payton replied. "As you say she can't go to a school, but I thought a governess might be a good idea; some one who could coach her for a while each day."

"The best solution, of course, and I know the very woman," Miss Strong said in her usual masterful way. "Bertha Steele, a nice old thing, and fitted in every way. Something of a martinet but that won't hurt the child."

"Now, Amy," Flora protested, "I'll have no martinet around her. My child is going to be dreadfully spoiled."

"Selfish woman," Miss Strong stormed; "spoil her until the novelty wears off, and then discipline her. It isn't fair."

Flora seemed to consider.

"No, you are right," she said at length. "I'll try not to spoil her; but when I think of what she has been through, Amy, I want to surround her with every luxury."

"Poof," snorted Miss Strong, "what she's been through indeed, fussed over by those quaint folk, and allowed to do just as she liked. No, don't ask me to be sympathetic about those four years. The child has had a glorious time, and I wish I'd had her advantages. She will know nature from A to Z. She has a unique start, and with her brain she will be no time at all in catching up with girls her own age." Amy Strong broke off, then added: "Do let me send for Bertha Steele, she is an ideal person really."

"Oh! very well," laughed Flora, "but if Joy doesn't like her, out she goes!"

Joy, of course, was not present at the above conversation; she was down in the kitchen with Bridget.

"And to think of your liking gingerbread after living all these years with them hay-thens," Bridget was saying.

"You mustn't call my gypsies heathens," Joy protested; "they were not. They had festa days just the same as you were telling me about, and they were much better cooks. Lots of times we had suckling pig, and it was much better than the roast beef we had last night for dinner."

"Humph! a suckling pig, indeed, you'll be

telling me you had boar's head next," Bridget replied, indignantly.

"Oh! we did," Joy teased; "and field mice, and hoptoads."

"Heaven preserve us! and its no wonder thin you don't know a proper roast when it's served up to you. But can you till fortunes?" Bridget looked around the room to make sure Jane was not in hearing, feeling sure that she would disapprove of such a question.

"Why, of course," Joy was fairly in her element; she loved to tease, as any of the gypsies could have told you. "I tell wonderful fortunes," she replied soberly.

"Will you till mine?" Bridget asked in a whisper. She held out her hand, only to jerk it away as Jane's determined footsteps were heard coming down the back stairs.

"Don't be after tilling on me, will you, dearie?" she begged, and Joy promised.

The day passed somehow in a bewilderment of strange ways, and the next morning they went shopping.

Then came the morning of Miss Steele's arrival, for the day of her coming could not be put off, and it loomed large in Joy's mind. Above all things she wanted to learn to read,

but she had a faint suspicion that she was not going to like the process.

The day itself, when it finally came, was far from propitious. It poured rain, and a heavy damp fog hung over everything. The car had been sent to the station for Miss Steele, and was expected to return any moment.

Joy sat in the living-room with her mother and Amy Strong, and fidgeted. It was really very difficult being a *Gajo*.

Because it rained, her mother would not let her go out; her new shoes cramped her feet, and her head ached from the dullness of it all. Poor Flora watched her fidget in consternation. She had done everything she could think of to make her happy, and had been rewarded only by a pucker between her eyebrows and a downward droop to her mouth.

The doorbell rang, and Jane ushered in Miss Steele.

Joy gave her one look and her heart contracted. She had been hoping until the last moment that she would be a gypsy sort of person; instead she was confronted by a tall, angular woman, with hollow cheeks, and small poppy eyes, a prominent Adam's apple, and large feet.

"Is this my charge?" she asked almost scornfully after the greetings of Mrs. Payton and Miss Strong were over "a very promising looking pupil" she went on as if speaking of the chair in the corner, or anything rather than the eager child before her.

"Hello!" said Joy, fighting down the desire to cry, scream, yell or do something to protest against this formidable person.

Miss Steele looked at her stonily. "Hello is a form of address to one's elders of which I do not approve." Miss Steele believed in taking the upper hand at once: "A little lady says 'how do you do,' and curtsies when introduced."

"Oh! Bertha, don't be such a ramrod," Amy Strong protested, "the child's never had a chance."

"I think when you learn the circumstances, you will be a little more sympathetic," Flora put in, despair in her heart; her mind was already made up—Miss Steele should go as soon as decency permitted. She wondered what Amy Strong could have been thinking of to have suggested such a person.

"Bertha does not understand the situation, that's all," said the powerful Miss Strong; "she and Joy will get along as right as rain

when we have explained." She turned to Joy, whose eyes were flashing, but whose lips trembled. "Run away youngster, and help Jane set the table."

Joy needed no second bidding. She ran out of the room, but not to Jane.

She went out into the open air where she could think. Regardless of the elements she ran on past the stable yard, the pond, and so to the lane. She sat down on the stone wall and sobbed her heart out for the gypsy trail.

CHAPTER IX

GEOFFREY HOTCHKISS

SHE cried so hard that she did not hear the soft clop clop of a horse's hoofs in the mud, and was startled to hear a voice say just above her:

"Hello, what's the trouble?"

She looked up to see a man smiling down at her from the back of a horse. Joy noticed, even before she noticed the man, that the horse was a beauty.

The man had a quiet face, and a serious smile, but his eyes danced. He was not handsome; in fact, he was homely, for his nose was quite large and his forehead bumpy; but his eyes—they were blue and bright as steel, and they positively radiated good humor.

"What's up?" he asked, jumping off his horse, and standing beside her; "beauty in distress, eh? Here's a clean hanky, and it's a nice big one. Come, now, tell me all about it."

Before she realized what she was doing Joy was confiding in this stranger.

"Poor little mite," was his first comment, "so you are the wonderful child the countryside has been talking about. Now let's see what can be done. Pam, I think, is the solution."

"Who's Pam?" Joy asked.

"Pam's a small imp, just about your age, and she happens by some lucky chance to be my daughter. Her real name is Pamela Hotchkiss. Now let's go and find your mother. I met her at the Colonel's, so I may go and call."

"But I don't want to go back. I want to go to my gypsies."

"Not a bit of it, you don't, really," Mr. Hotchkiss said, seriously, "you couldn't possibly leave your mother now. It would break her heart all over again, and as Pam would say 'it wouldn't be the sporting thing to do!'"

"I know," Joy replied, forlornly, "and I love her lots, really, but she doesn't understand."

"Now perhaps she does; let's go home and find out anyhow," Mr. Hotchkiss said, as he swung her up to the saddle, and mounted behind her.

Joy put her arms around the horse's neck.

"Like horses, eh?" he asked. "Now Pam prefers motors. Frightened once by a horse, and has never liked them since."

"Motors are new fangled, so Liubo says," Joy commented.

"Who's Liubo?" he inquired.

"He is the chief of my tribe," she told him.

"Must be a nice man; I'd like to meet him."

"Oh! would you? Then you can the very next time they camp near here."

They turned in at the driveway for they had come around by the road, and the Payton chauffeur saw them. He took Mr. Hotchkiss' horse to the barn, and that gentleman and Joy mounted the steps to the veranda. Jane let them in.

"Wherever have you been, Miss Joy?" I'm sure I thought you safe in the living-room."

"We are pretty wet to come inside," Mr. Hotchkiss explained; "perhaps I might have a word or two with Mrs. Payton here in the hall."

"Yes, sir, I will call her at once."

Jane disappeared into the living-room to return in a moment followed by Flora.

"Why, Mr. Hotchkiss, how do you do?"

Joy, my darling, where under the sun have you been? Do run upstairs with Jane and change your wet clothes. Did you find her, Mr. Hotchkiss?" was her greeting.

"I did, and her tears matched the rain. She was going off to find her gypsies." Joy heard that much as she ran up the stairs in Jane's wake. She felt perfectly safe in leaving her fate in the hands of this nice man.

"She was hunting the gypsies? Oh! dear, what can I do?" Flora cried. "Mr. Hotchkiss, tell me what to do. You have a daughter."

Mr. Hotchkiss looked at her in admiring silence. He had forgotten how really beautiful she was.

"My dear lady," he said, gently. His eyes ceased to twinkle, and became very serious. "I think I can. The governess whom you have engaged had better go."

"But I haven't engaged her. I mean to send her packing to-morrow. She is quite impossible."

"Good enough," Mr. Hotchkiss replied, heartily; "if Joy had known that she would not have run away. I am sure the woman must be a perfect ogress."

"Oh! she is." Flora laughed a ringing little laugh. "You don't know of any really nice person who wants to be a governess, do you? You see school is out of the question for Joy, because she hasn't had a scrap of education, and she must catch up before she goes with other girls."

"If you are sure you will not think I am trying to intrude upon so short an acquaintance, and if you will feel quite free to say exactly what you think, perhaps I may be able to solve the difficulty for you. You see I have a little daughter, who has never been to school because of a long illness."

"I'm sorry," said Flora, sympathetically.

"She is quite all right now," Mr. Hotchkiss assured her; "and my idea was this. Let Joy have lessons with Pam. She has a governess who is really a splendid woman. Pam, herself, is an imp, but—"

"Oh! Mr. Hotchkiss, what a truly wonderful idea," Flora did not wait to hear more; "but will Pam like it?" she asked.

"Pam will love it," Mr. Hotchkiss replied with feeling.

"How can I thank you?"

"Don't. It is as big a favor to me. Pam is pining to know some girls, and there is no

one I'd rather have her with than Joy. I've fallen quite in love with her."

Flora sighed contentedly.

"When can they meet?" she asked eagerly.

"This afternoon; will you bring Joy for tea; or because the weather is inclement perhaps you will permit us to come over here to call?"

"Come, and we will have a royal tea party!" Flora exclaimed, happily. "Oh! if the children only like each other."

"I say," Mr. Hotchkiss began, "let's make it a surprise. We won't tell either of them a word about the other. Joy knows I have a daughter, but if she asks you when she is to meet her, why, just answer vaguely, 'some day.'"

"What a happy solution it will be," Mrs. Payton added confidently.

"Oh! absolutely," Mr. Hotchkiss agreed.

"And now," said Flora, quite as though she were talking to a very small child, "I am going to send you home. You are shockingly wet, and unless you want to take a very bad cold you must change. If you catch cold what will become of our scheme?" she asked, laughing.

"I see your consideration is purely selfish,"



Jane stood over her with a bottle of cough medicine.

Mr. Hotchkiss chuckled, as he held out his hand. "Until this afternoon, then."

He walked down the broad steps with a smile on his face, and Mrs. Payton stood in the doorway in spite of the rain to watch him until he was out of sight on his way to the barn. Then she ran upstairs to Joy.

She found her with her feet soaking in a tub of hot mustard water, while Jane stood over her with a bottle of cough medicine.

"But I won't catch cold," she was protesting, angrily. "Joe and I always stayed out in the rain."

"You may go, Jane," said Flora, pausing just inside the door. "Darling, we do fuss over you terribly, don't we?"

"But mother dear, I never had a cold in my life, and I always, always got my feet wet," Joy answered.

"Well, never mind, don't let's think about it any more. Mother wants to talk to you, dear."

"Yes," said Joy, patiently, sure that she was going to be scolded, and feeling rather hopeless about it.

"Tell me," said Flora, "why did you run away? Don't you love me a little bit?"

"Of course I do," Joy answered promptly,

"but oh, mother, I couldn't stand that horrid woman."

"But she is going to-morrow," Flora replied. "Joy, can't you understand dear, that all I want in the world is to make you happy."

Joy nodded solemnly.

"And now will you promise never to run away again?" Flora asked.

Joy considered.

"I don't want to run away." There was a pause. "Yes, I'll promise," she said at last. "I want to stay here with you, just you, and nobody else, except Mr. Hotchkiss; I like him, don't you, mummie?"

Flora Payton did not reply. Instead she turned to her daughter very seriously. "Joy, will you promise me something else, too?" she begged.

"Of course," Joy replied.

"Promise me that when you are upset about anything you will come to me. I will promise on my side to try and make whatever is bothering you right, because—oh, my little girl, if you went back to the gypsies it would break my heart!"

"But, mother," said Joy, round-eyed and solemn, "I promised you that I wouldn't, and a gypsy never breaks her word."

"My darling, you are not a gypsy," Flora denied.

"No, I'm not," Joy's face suddenly broke into smiles, "but mummie, dearest, I'm almost one; but from now on I promise to be a *Gajo*."

CHAPTER X

PAM

AT four o'clock Joy was in the kitchen. "Bridget, why are you making so many cakes for tea?" she asked.

"Company," replied Bridget.

"Humph, I don't think much of Miss Steele for company," Joy grumbled; "well, she's going away to-morrow morning, so there is really no need to fuss."

She surveyed the kitchen listlessly.

"I wish I had something to do," she said.

"Try your hand at cutting out them cookies," Bridget suggested; "sure when I was your age I was taking care of all my brothers and sisters, and sorry work I found it. I'd have liked nothing better than to have nothin' to do wanst in a while."

"How many brothers and sisters did you have?" queried Joy.

"Eight younger than meself, and four older," Bridget answered promptly.

"Oh what fun!" Joy exclaimed.

"Fun, is it? The only fun about it was when we all started fighting. Sure you could have heard us a block away."

"Where did you live?"

"County Galloway, Parish of Ballymaquaid, Ireland. It's me father's address to this day."

"Is that very far away?" Joy was asking when the doorbell rang. "Who can that be?" she inquired. "Bridget, I'll come back and cut those cookies; I'm going to see who's there."

She went upstairs slowly, for she was not very curious. Jane was just shutting the living-room door.

"Who is it, Jane?" she whispered, as Jane came toward her.

"Oh here you are. Go straight into the living-room; your mother wants you," Jane replied, importantly.

"Another governess," Joy sighed resignedly, and hesitated at the door. "Let's see, I'm to shake hands, and not grab the food. Thank goodness there are no folks at tea."

She opened the door timidly. What she expected to see was another Miss Steele. What she really saw was Pamela Hotchkiss—blue-eyed, red-headed Pam; for her eyes were

the color of corn flowers and her hair was like burnished copper.

Joy stared at her, and Pam stared back. Pam saw an oval face set in a frame of dark-brown hair, big brown eyes that held flecks of gold in their depths, and a sensitive mouth.

Mr. Hotchkiss broke the silence.

"If you were a few years younger," he remarked, "I should say the cat had your tongues, and you'd hate that; but as it is I suppose you are just sizing each other up."

"Just what we are doing, Pops. What a bully surprise. Let's get introduced so we can talk."

Mrs. Payton suppressed a smile.

"Pam, this is my little daughter Joy; and Joy this is Pam. I hope you two girls are going to like each other."

"Oh, we are," said Pam, with ready assurance. "I like Joy a whole lot already."

"I like you, too," Joy said shyly.

"Let's get away from your mother and my father, and talk. Have you any animals?"

"No," sighed Joy, "and I miss the dogs terribly."

"If I had known that I would have brought Soncy over with me. I wanted to, but father wouldn't let me. You see, you might have

had a Great Dane, who would have gobbled him up. Soncy is a dear, and I know you'll love him; he's a Sealyham," Pam babbled on.

"What happened to your dogs?" she asked.

"I left them with the gypsies," Joy replied.

"Oh! how could you?" Pam asked.

"Well, you see they were really theirs."

Then seeing the puzzled expression on the other's face, Joy added, "I used to live with the gypsies before I found mother."

"Live with the gypsies!" Pam fairly shouted. "Pops, I believe you knew it all the time, and you never told me."

"Well, hasn't it been more fun finding it out this way?" Pops inquired.

"Of course it has, and oh! I am so thrilled," she broke off abruptly to add: "Have you a playroom?"

"There's the nursery," Joy hesitated.

"Oh! well, that's the same thing; only I call mine the playroom. Let's go up there where we can talk. I'm simply bursting with questions."

They went arm and arm up to the nursery; and Pam curled herself up on the window seat, while Joy, through force of habit, sat on the floor.

"Now then, I've simply got to get things

straight," Pam began; "did you really, honestly, cross your heart live with the gypsies?"

"Yes, I did," said Joy. "My very best friend is a gypsy."

Pam's sunny face clouded over for an instant. "Oh, dear, just my luck," she complained; "and I thought I was going to be your best friend. You've simply got to be mine."

"But," Joy looked at her in despair, "I'd like to have you for my best friend, too. I wonder if Joe would mind. Of course I can't love you quite as much as I do him."

"*Him!*" Pam interrupted, "do you mean to tell me that your best friend is a boy?"

"Yes," Joy admitted, "a gypsy boy, and I played with him for four years. I do really love him next best to mummie, but I'll give you next place."

"Oh, that's all right; you see I wanted to be your best girl friend, and now I can be. Isn't that a lark? But look here, if we're going to be best friends hadn't you better tell me all about everything, and then I'll tell you my story. It will be awfully slow after yours. Perhaps I'd better tell it first and get it over with."

"Oh, do tell me; I want to know everything. Have you always lived in a house?"

"But, of course, you see," Pam began, "I used to be very sick; my old back and legs were funny, and I couldn't walk, so I just stayed in the house. Of course I could look out of the window as much as I liked, but I got mighty sick of that, I can tell you.

"Well, one day Pops came in with the cross-est old man, and I just moaned, and said to myself 'another doctor,' but well—you can't be interested in all this, so I'll get it over quickly. He cured me, made me walk, and run. Then we came to live here, and I've had a great old time with Pops, but I did wish for a best friend, because older people don't always understand."

"No, I know what you mean—about rubbers, and going out in the rain, and playing tricks. Liubo never could see why Joe and I liked to put pepper on the dash boards of the wagons but it was lots of fun seeing the whole lot go by and everybody sneezing, except mother Ia and Persa; you see we couldn't do it to them."

"But I don't see," Pam replied, decidedly; "who were Persa, and Mother Ia, and Liubo? Now you start right in at the beginning, and tell all about it—every word, mind."

And Joy told. It was easy, for Pam made an excellent audience with her "ahs!" and "ohs!" By the time Joy had finished, Pam was green with envy.

"Now promise me," she beseeched, "that you will let me see Joe the very minute the gypsies camp here again."

Joy hesitated. Pam was a *Gajo*, but then, too, Pam was Pam, and how could anyone help liking her? She would risk it.

"Very well," she promised. "I'll take you, but you must promise to love Mother Ia and Persa."

"The dears, of course I will," Pam replied,

The room was filled with their chatter for the next half hour, and then Jane came to call them to tea.

"Well, infants, how did you get along; did you pull out each other's hair?" Mr. Hotchkiss greeted them.

"Why, Pops, of course not," Pam denied. "We're best friends, and we are going to see just oceans of each other, aren't we, Joy?"

Joy had her mouth full of cookies and regulation number one of the new code of manners was "don't talk with your mouth full," so she nodded vigorously.

"Well, if you are such good friends," said

Mr. Hotchkiss, "how would you like to take lessons together?"

Joy gulped down the remaining bit of cookie and cried—

"Oh yes, please, please let us."

"Just think of the good times we can have playing tricks on Miss York," Pam exclaimed.

"Poor Miss York," murmured Flora into her teacup.

Pam turned to Joy. "You'll adore Sniffs; she is so old-fashioned and funny and she looks like this," Pam drew her merry features into a ridiculous simper, and for the second looked like an elderly and precise spinster.

Joy burst out laughing.

"Oh, Pam, if she looks like that I shan't like her a bit."

"Oh! but you will," Pam insisted; "she's an old darling."

"But, Sniffs," said Flora reprovingly, "what a dreadful nickname."

"I know," said Mr. Hotchkiss resignedly; "I've tried every form of correction, but Sniffs persists."

"Oh! Mrs. Payton, if you could only see her and hear her," Pam defended herself.

"She does sniff so whenever I get a lesson

wrong, or whenever I'm bad. In fact she sniffs most of the time. Anyhow the Colonel nicknamed her. He asked me one morning how Miss Sniffs was."

"Ten bad marks for the Colonel," Geoffrey Hotchkiss laughed.

But Flora looked perturbed. That Pam was an imp there was no doubt, and she wondered if she were the best companion for Joy. She looked at Pam daintily munching a cooky, and realized that imp though she was one could not help loving her.

"Joy," said Mr. Hotchkiss, seriously, "do you think you could teach this daughter of mine to like horses? If you can I will buy you each a pony—that is, with your mother's permission."

"But don't you like horses?" Joy asked, aghast.

"I like them," said Pam bravely, "but to tell you the truth I'm afraid of them. One of Pops' kicked me just after I got well, and I keep thinking every other horse is going to do it again. But I'll try to like them if you want me to."

Joy clasped her hands and looked at Mr. Hotchkiss appealingly: "Oh, would you buy the ponies from Liubo?" she asked.

PAM

"But dear you don't know where Liubo is," Flora reminded her.

"Oh! I can find them," Joy assured her; "and Liubo has two of the darlingest ponies."

Geoffrey Hotchkiss looked at her and smiled with delight.

"That settles it," he said; "we will get up a picnic luncheon the next time your gypsies are in this neighborhood, and see the ponies Liubo has to offer."

"When does the Colonel return?" asked Flora trying to change the subject, for she was not at all sure that this was a good plan.

"On Wednesday, that's to-morrow," Mr. Hotchkiss told her; "have you sent him word that Joy is home?"

"No, for he didn't tell me where he was going," Flora replied; "and anyway I thought it would be fun to surprise him."

Pam and her father had risen to go, and were walking towards the door when Joy suddenly threw her arms around Pam.

"You will surely come back again!" she cried excitedly, "promise."

"Oh, I promise," Pam returned, hugging her in return; "and oh! Joy, if you get lonesome between now and to-morrow, just think of the larks we are going to have together."

CHAPTER XI

BEST FRIENDS

BRIGHT and early the next morning Joy was up and out on the lawn. Anticipation ran riot in her mind. Would Pam be as nice on the second meeting as she had been on the first? What would Miss York look like? Would the Colonel remember her? And best of all, when would she see her gypsies again?

She looked up from the rose she was smelling and saw Miss Strong coming towards her.

"Well, child," she began in her heavy masculine voice, "you certainly look part of the picture. How do you like living in a house?"

"It's so stuffy, Aunt Amy," Joy replied, using the title she had been bidden to use, but rejoicing in her heart that this overpowering woman was not really a relative.

"I don't doubt," Miss Strong went on, "that you are in for a glorious spoiling. But remember this—the world hates a spoiled

child, and if you want any good advice at any time come to me and you'll get it. Your mother will always tell you what you want to hear. She is soft, is Flora."

"She is not," stormed Joy; "you mustn't say anything about my mother," and she stood regarding Miss Strong with mutinous eyes.

She expected correction. Even in the gypsy camp she would have been punished for such insubordination to one's elder, but Miss Strong smiled delightedly.

"Spunk," she said; "I like spunk, and you are right. Always stand up for your mother. One last bit of advice, spoil your mother as much as you like, but don't let her spoil you. Now I'm through preaching. I am going to England next week, so this is good-by." She turned abruptly on her heel and walked back to the house.

Joy pondered her advice for several minutes, and then decided to take it. She cast about her for a way to begin. The buttercups and daisies in a neighboring field beckoned to her and she made up her mind to pick a bunch to put at her mother's place at the table. But if she picked a bunch for her mother what would become of Aunt Amy and Miss Steele.

Joy had a discriminating mind. She picked a big bunch for her mother, of daisies and buttercups and clover. It never dawned on her that she could pick the garden flowers, and she much preferred the wild ones. Clover was her favorite of them all. In selecting Miss Strong's bunch she omitted the clover and Miss Steele found at her place a small handful of buttercups.

The three women took the tribute in three different ways. Flora saw her flowers, smiled; then glanced at the others and blushed. Miss Strong laughed noisily, and Miss Steele pushed hers aside in injured silence.

Joy watched them all carefully.

"Well, I couldn't help it," she said aloud; the gypsies had taught her frankness. "You see, that's the way I like you. Mother first, Aunt Amy next and then Miss Steele," she added, reluctantly.

Immediately after breakfast Flora ordered the car, and they were whisked away to the station with Miss Steele and Miss Strong and then on to the Hotchkiss home.

Pam lived in an old rambling white house that was built on the side of a hill. It had apple green shutters, and looked cozy in spite

of it's size. Pam rushed to open the front door.

"Oh, Joy! I was so afraid you'd change your mind and not come, or something. Come along up to the playroom; Sniffs is waiting for us."

Miss York in no way resembled Miss Steele. She was a little fat person with bright red cheeks, and a distressing habit of tossing her head and sniffing, when anything displeased her. This habit had so forcibly struck the Colonel that in an idle moment he had dubbed her "Miss Sniffs," and Pam could not be blamed for having adopted it as her own nickname!

"So this is Joy?" she said, tritely. "I hear you are to join Pam in her lessons."

"Yes, but dear Sniffs," Pam began before Joy had a chance to answer, "you are surely not going to give us lessons to-day."

Miss York sniffed and Joy had all she could do to keep from giggling. "Now Pam, don't be difficult," Miss York complained; "and what will Joy think of your calling your governess by such a frivolous name."

"Oh, Joy is going to call you Sniffs, too," Pam replied.

"Oh, may I?" Joy exclaimed. "I'd love to.

Sniffs is so much nicer than Miss York."

Miss York capitulated. "Very well, my dear," she said weakly, "I suppose you may, but of course you understand I never really sniff."

"Maybe not really," said Joy.

Pam returned to the attack. "Say yes, about there not being any lessons to-day," she coaxed.

"Now, Pam, there were no lessons yesterday, because you were going calling in the afternoon, though why that was a reason, I'm sure I don't know; and there were no lessons the day before because Meeny died."

"Who was Meeny?" asked Joy.

"One of my darling kittens. There were four of them, and I named them Eeeny, Meeny, Miney and Mo. Tag is the mother's name, and she rolled on Meeny and killed her; so of course I had to bury her, and have a proper funeral.

"Oh!" sighed Joy, understandingly.

"Of course it was very sad, the little cat's dying, but you must understand, Pam," Miss York said decidedly, "I cannot go on giving you holidays."

"But this is such a very special occasion," Pam reminded her.

"Oh let's have lessons," Joy protested. "I think it would be fun."

"Well, it never has been yet," Pam sighed, "maybe with you here it will be."

Miss York took advantage of the pause that followed.

"Take your seats please, girls," she said.

Pam and Joy sat down on either side of a big mahogany table, while Miss York settled herself between them.

Joy looked around the playroom. She liked it. It was filled with comfortable old furniture, and some of the chairs were covered in gay chintz; the windows were hung in the same material. There was a big box beside the fireplace which she discovered was filled with Pam's discarded toys. Underneath the seat that ran along below three casement windows was a shelf filled with books. They had all been read to Pam by her father. Joy felt the urge to read them herself. Her gaze came back to Miss York.

"We shall have the arithmetic lesson first," that lady began.

"Oh, no," Pam protested, "let's have reading first."

"Pam, you are being difficult," Miss York sighed, and sniffed.

The lessons proceeded and Joy proved an apt pupil. She had a remarkable memory, for she had a keen desire to learn.

Not so Pam; she was far from stupid, but she had no application. She learned readily, and forgot as easily.

At twelve o'clock school was over for the day and the children roamed around the Hotchkiss place, wondering what to do next. They visited the barn, and Joy petted Mr. Hotchkiss' horse Wild; then they played with the kittens, and Soncy. They finally went off for a walk.

A rumble of wagons drew their attention to the roadway.

"Sounds like gypsies," Pam began, excitedly.

"Much too heavy," Joy replied, listening.

They ran down the lane to investigate.

"Oh! Joy," Pam exclaimed as the first of the wagons came into view, "it's a circus! Let's make the Colonel take us. He's lots of fun at a circus."

"Oh, but would he?" Joy cried, and she thought to herself that it would be more fun to go alone with Pam, and slip under the canvas tent when nobody was looking, as she and Joe had always done. But she said nothing

about her thoughts, for she was beginning to realize that in this new world, grown-ups were eternally to be considered.

"Come on, we'll go and find him," and Pam caught her by the arm, and started back across the lawn.

The Colonel lived in a ramshackle house on the edge of the Payton property. Joy thought she remembered it from the brass knocker on the door to the roof that sagged. The whole house would have been the better for a coat of paint. Here the Colonel lived with his one man servant, in peace with the world except when he fought the Great War to a more successful finish. Then he was apt to be pugnacious.

He had been too old to participate in the struggle and he resented the fact very deeply.

The house was neat and ship-shape, and showed the hand of Serg. George Washington Cadwallider, a tall lanky negro with kinky gray hair who never answered to any other title than Sergeant.

It was he who let the children in.

"Morning, Sergeant." Pam drew herself up, and saluted.

The Sergeant returned it, briskly clicking his heels together.

"Colonel in his quarters?" asked Pam.

"Yes, Missy, he is at Chateau Thierry this morning."

"Has he won the battle yet?"

"Sure to have by this time, Missy. I done think it's pretty safe to interrupt him."

Pam went over to the library door while Joy waited, and knocked.

"Sergeant," growled a voice from within, "did I or did I not leave word that I was not to be disturbed?"

The Sergeant grinned, and Pam replied:

"It's Pam, Colonel, please let me in; I have a surprise for you."

"Oh, come in, Imp," the Colonel called, his voice changing to a note of kindliness, and Pam, followed by Joy, pushed open the door.

The Colonel swept away his papers and got to his feet. He was a tall, thin man with gray hair, and gray eyes. His shoulders in spite of his sixty years were as straight as a ramrod.

Pam kissed him, and then pointed to Joy. "Here's the surprise," she said.

"Got a playmate at last have you?" he grumbled, a little chagrined that such should be the case.

"Oh, Colonel, don't you know her?" Pam exclaimed.

"Course not; think I know every child around here," he said testily.

"But you've seen her before," teased Pam.

"Very likely," replied the Colonel.

"Oh, but you will be surprised when you find out who she really is."

The Colonel looked at Joy curiously, and Joy smiled up at him.

"Never saw her before in my life," he announced.

"But you have," Joy insisted, finding her tongue. "I've had tea with you in your garden, oh! ever so long ago."

"Possibly," said the Colonel gruffly, "who are you?"

"Oh, let me tell!" Pam cried. "It's Joy Payton come back from the gypsies," she announced.

"Bless my soul!" the Colonel exclaimed, and he sat down very suddenly.

CHAPTER XII

THE COLONEL

WHY wasn't I told the moment I arrived this morning?" the Colonel demanded.

"We wanted to surprise you, but now I'm afraid we've spoiled it, because Pops and Mrs. Payton aren't here," Pam said ruefully. "But I forgot all about them when I saw the circus."

"Oh, you saw a circus, did you?" asked the Colonel. "Well, I'll tell you what we'll do. We'll have a party to celebrate Joy's return, and we'll all go to the circus, Flora and Geoffrey too."

He put his arm around Joy, and squeezed her so hard that it hurt, and there were tears in his cold gray eyes as he said—

"Thank God! my child, thank God!"

"You mean you'll take us all to the circus?" asked Pam.

"Yes, and you'll all come here to dinner first. Can we manage that, Sergeant?" the

Colonel asked of the grinning negro, who had been a silent witness to the meeting.

"Oh, yes sir, yes sir, we all can manage that all right; and I says with you, sir, thank God! thank God!"

Pam hugged the Colonel, and Joy smiled at the Sergeant.

"Let's go home and tell the family!" Pam exclaimed, and they ran off, as the Colonel and the Sergeant watched them out of sight.

"Where have you two youngsters been?" Mr. Hotchkiss demanded, as they stepped through a long French window into the living-room.

"Oh! Joy, we've been worried to death about you; I came down in the car for you at half-past twelve, and you were not here. Miss York is looking everywhere for you." Flora jumped up from the big chair and came toward Joy eagerly.

"We've been to the Colonel's," Joy explained; "and, Mother, he didn't know me, but he's going to take us to the circus and we are going to his house to dinner."

"Isn't that exciting, Pops?" Pam asked.

"Thrilling," agreed Mr. Hotchkiss.

"I have news for you, Joy," Mrs. Payton began. "Your cousin Gloria Payton is com-

ing to-morrow to spend a week-end, and I thought it would be nice if we had a regular party. I haven't seen Gloria since she was a tiny baby," she added, "but I'm sure she will be a nice girl. She is a little older than you are."

"Oh!" gasped Pam, "excitements have been happening ever since yesterday. Pops dear, do say I may go."

"Of course you may," Mr. Hotchkiss responded, laughingly; "and now how about some luncheon?"

Joy wasn't sure that she liked the idea of a cousin and she said a little shyly as they took their places at the gate-legged table:

"Gloria won't be with us when we go to get the ponies, will she?"

"No," said Mr. Hotchkiss, "we'll make that a party of four."

"I am glad," said Joy quietly.

"Let's plan what we'll do while she's here," Pam suggested. "Oh! Mrs. Payton, do you mean we can have a regular party, with lots of girls and boys? But how can we," she broke off to ask; "we don't know any except ourselves."

"But I know lots of girls' mothers," Flora

assured her. "Don't worry, we'll have a regular party."

"Won't it be fun," crowed Joy, "and Mummie dear, I'll remember to be careful about my table manners."

"The bully little kid," said Mr. Hotchkiss.

"Joy," said Pam when luncheon was over and they were taking a stroll, ostensibly with Miss York but in reality yards ahead of her, "Joy, promise me that I can always be your best friend," she went on seriously.

"Oh, Pam, of course you can. I was just going to ask you the same thing. I was thinking of Gloria, were you?" Joy replied.

"Yes, I was," admitted Pam, "maybe you'll like her best."

"I'll hate her, I think," laughed Joy. "I know she'll be a regular *Gajo*."

"But we're that—anyhow I am," Pam replied.

"You are not," Joy denied, "you're a gypsy; even Joe would say so."

"Let's go over and help the Sergeant get ready for to-night, it's lots of fun to be in the Colonel's kitchen."

When asked for permission to go, Miss York demurred. She was afraid of the Col-

onel, but as usual Pam overcame her objections.

"We've come to help," Pam announced as the Sergeant opened the door.

The Sergeant groaned inwardly. Pam had "helped" him before, and he knew what it meant.

"What will you do, Missy?" he asked, resignedly.

"I think we will set the table," Pam replied.

This was better than broiling the steak, so the Sergeant sighed with relief. Miss York sat out on the veranda, and Joy and Pam started to work with a will.

"I'll set it," said Pam, "because I know how. Do you think you could decorate it?"

"With flowers, I could," Joy agreed. "I'll ask Sniffs to help me pick some."

"Yes, do," Pam replied, already busy with the silver.

"Not the Colonel's roses, please, there's only a few, and he's very choice of them," the Sergeant besought.

"No," promised Joy, "I won't pick anything but wild flowers; I know those best."

With Miss York to help her, Joy picked an armful of black-eyed susans and white daisies.

She arranged them in a star-shaped pattern on the table and put a little bunch at each place. She made a wreath, and hung it on the Colonel's chair.

Later when the dinner was served, she solemnly crowned the Colonel, "because," she exclaimed, "you're the chief, you see."

"Well, bless my soul," he exclaimed, "they taught you pretty manners in that gypsy camp, didn't they?"

Pam hurried them through the meal, partly because she didn't want to miss any of the circus, and also because she knew the Sergeant wanted to go too, and must have time to wash his dishes.

Miss York had been included in the invitation, but had pleaded a headache, and refused.

"Why under the sun do you want us to finish so early?" protested Mr. Hotchkiss; "a hot tent is no place to sit and wait on a warm night like this."

"But, Pops, think of the animals," Pam reminded him.

"I'll tell you what I'll do," the Colonel said, "I'll take the children ahead and leave you to escort Mrs. Payton."

And so it was arranged.

The circus was a poor affair of one ring.

Joy made straight for the elephant, and fed him all her peanuts. Pam stood fascinated before the lions' cage. The Colonel watched them with keen pleasure. They stared open-eyed and open-mouthed before the sword swallower, and shook hands with the dwarf.

After due respect had been paid to each one of the side shows they took their places on the hard boards that served as seats. The tent began to fill up with surprising speed, and Joy, who was on the Colonel's right, found herself flanked on the other side by a party of youngsters who were seemingly having the best of times.

Beyond them and at the end of the row, sat the homeliest and the nicest woman Joy had ever seen. There were two girls and two boys in her party, and after she had arranged them to her satisfaction, the boys together and the girls together she looked over, saw Joy, and smiled. Then she discovered the Colonel.

"Why, Colonel Tracy," she said, in a soft voice, "what are you doing at the circus; and who are those nice girls you have with you?"

"Ah! Mrs. Root, I imagine I am here for the same reason that you are. Let me present Pam Hotchkiss and Joy Payton." The Colonel had risen and bowed.

Pam shook hands first, then Joy held out her thin little brown hand, remembered Miss Steele's admonition, tried to curtsy, caught her foot and slipped through between the seats.

She was unhurt and every one laughed, which broke the ice, and by the time she was hauled up again they were all talking and laughing.

One of the girls was Edna Root, the other was a friend of hers named Marcia Gordon. The boys were the Root twins, Bob and Ted. Their ages ran from ten to twelve, the girls twelve and the boys ten.

"You looked awfully funny when you disappeared down there," Bob laughed.

"Bob, don't be rude," his mother corrected. She was looking intently at Joy. She could not make up her mind whether this was the lost Joy Payton, or an adopted daughter of Flora's; but whoever she was, Constance Root decided she liked her.

"I hope you didn't hurt yourself," Marcia Gordon said politely.

"Not a bit," laughed Joy, "but I won't try curtsying again until I'm on firm ground."

"Oh," exclaimed Pam, "there's your mother and Pops; and here comes the circus."

Mrs. Root looked at Flora, and decided that Joy must be her own daughter, for nothing else could have so changed her from the careworn, prematurely old woman to this laughing beauty. They found seats near them, and all eyes turned to the ring.

A blare of trumpets and in came the ringmaster riding on a skittish mare at the head of the procession. Joy looked at the horse, gave a little start, and then subsided.

At this moment the horse began to act queerly. She tossed her head, whinnied and stood still, halting the procession.

"Oh it is, it is!" exclaimed Joy, and in her excitement she stood up.

"It is what?" demanded Bob Root.

Joy had no time to answer him for the horse came straight toward her and stretched out her neck. Joy was on the ground in a moment, slipping between the intersected spectators, and had her arms around the horse's neck while it nozzled in her shoulder.

"Pride," she said. "Pride! you know me! However did you get here?"

The ringmaster was out of the saddle at once and standing beside her. His showmanship was aroused.

She shook hands with Joy.

"So you know my horse, little lady?" he said in a loud voice.

"Yes!" she exclaimed, "you bought him from Liubo, didn't you?"

"I got her from a gypsy, I know that," and the man looked at Joy's white lawn dress curiously. "How do you happen to be knowing gypsies?" he asked.

"Oh I just do," said Joy evasively.

The man did not press the point.

"Well since you know my horse so well, how about riding around the ring on her back?" and before Joy realized what he was doing he had lifted her into the saddle.

They walked around the ring twice while the audience clapped delightedly. Then with a last hug, and pat for Pride, Joy returned to her seat.

"Sit over here by me," Bob Root called, "you're some girl."

"Where did you know that horse?" Ted inquired, eagerly.

"Oh, I'll tell you all about it some day," Joy replied; "now I want to watch the circus."

Though the performance progressed necks still craned to get a glimpse of Joy. At last the kicking mule was led in and happily caused a diversion.

The ringmaster offered a dollar reward to anybody who could stay on his back three minutes. Thus challenged, several in the audience rose and came forward to try their luck, only to receive a painful fall for their efforts.

Then arose ex-Sergeant George Washington Cadwallider. "I can ride dat mule," he said slowly and walked to the ring.

The Colonel held his breath. The honor of the United States Army was at stake. He need have had no fear. Once on the mule's back, the Sergeant stuck, to the admiration of the crowd.

The mule bucked and kicked, only to find his rider still with him at the end of all his gyrations.

The Sergeant received his reward, given reluctantly by the ringmaster, and the performance ended with the usual concert.

"Now let's make a real night of it, and come home to my house for lemonade and cookies!" Mrs. Root exclaimed.

The invitation was hailed with delight. The young people climbed into one car, and Bob insisted upon sitting next to Joy.

"I never played with a girl in my life before, but I'll play with you," he said.

"And Pam?" Joy inquired.

"Sure, Pam too."

"Same here," echoed Ted.

The twelve-year old girls felt slightly out of it. To-night was Joy's night.

CHAPTER XIII

GLORIA

BOB and Ted rode over the next day, as soon as lessons with their tutor were over. They came on their bicycles.

Over the lemonade, the night before, Joy had been induced to tell the story of her life with the gypsies. She assumed the proportions of a heroine in the eyes of the two boys. They both treated her with distinction but Bob was her own particular cavalier. Pam fell to the lot of Ted, who accepted her grudgingly at first, and never after that repented of his bargain.

"Say, Joy, if you like I'll teach you how to ride my bike," Bob began.

They were all out on the roadway. Pam was spending the afternoon with Joy.

"Oh, I'd like that!" Joy exclaimed; "let's go down to the lane where no one can watch me fall off; and Ted can teach Pam."

"All right," said Ted.

They wheeled the bicycles past the pond.

"This is awfully bumpy," Ted complained, but Bob discovered that the hard footpath between the ruts would do for a first lesson.

Joy mounted, and the handle bars wiggled under her uncertain hands; of course she steered straight for the ruts. The front wheel caught, and a second later both she and Bob were in a tangled heap.

Pam and Ted laughed so hard that they couldn't pick them up.

"Our turn next!" Pam exclaimed. She mounted Ted's bicycle, and he steered her triumphantly the length of the lane and back.

"Come on, Joy, don't let them beat us!" Bob cried, and this time Joy stuck on.

They were all intent on their lessons, with Pam very much in the lead, when Jane found them.

"Children, I've been looking everywhere for you," she called; "your mother wants you to go and meet Miss Gloria. Come now, hurry up."

The four faces fell.

"And we were having such a good time, too," sighed Joy.

They found Flora waiting for them on the veranda.

"Mummy, can't we all go to the station to meet her?" Joy asked.

"Yes, dear, I think she'd like that," Flora replied.

"I choose to sit in front with Patrick!" Pam cried.

"Me too!" Ted exclaimed.

They were just in time for the incoming train; and they all trooped out on the platform to look for Gloria.

She made an impressive entrance. With the brakeman carrying her bags she alighted, the last word in flapperdom—short skirts, expensive shoes, and a liberal display of make-up.

Flora groaned at sight of her. She was so exactly what she didn't want Joy to be.

"Oh! here you are, I'm sure," she minced her words as she spoke, "which is my little cousin?" she inquired.

"Oh! dear, I guess I am," said Joy.

"Aren't you a darling; such a romantic little figure?" she gushed on.

Joy, Pam and the twins stood still, and stared at her.

"A flapper," was Bob's disgusted comment.

"How is your mother, my dear?" Flora asked.

"Oh, mother's all right. She sent you her love, and so did father. It was awfully sweet of you, Aunt Flora, to have me come and visit you," and once seated in the car she asked: "You're much younger than mother, aren't you?"

"No, I don't think so," Flora replied, absent-mindedly; she was wondering if it were possible that Gloria was only thirteen.

"Of course you and I will be more companionable than Joy and I, because she is such a kid."

"Humph," said Joy, and continued to look out of the window.

The others stared at the girl in silence. Tea was ready for them when they reached home, and Jane opened the door.

"The Saints preserve us!" she said, when she saw Gloria.

"Mummy," Joy whispered, "do we have to have tea in the living-room?"

Flora saw the appealing look on her face, and had mercy.

"No, children, you may have tea on the lawn; ask cook to make you a pitcher of lemonade, and give you some cookies."

"Wow! what a girl," Bob exclaimed as soon as they were out of hearing of the house.

"Did you see the powder on her nose?"

"And the awful part of it is that we'll have to be nice to her," Pam sighed; "and to think I worried about her," she laughed, and looked at Joy.

"I'm not going to be nice to her," Joy announced; "if Joe were here he'd wash her face."

"Well, we can do that, too; say, wouldn't it be a lark to take her to the pond, and stick her head in the water?" Ted suggested.

"Oh, let's; it would serve her right; she called us little girls, too!" Pam exclaimed; "and Joy, do you know I don't think your mother would mind. She didn't look very pleased."

"Mother puts powder on her nose," Bob commented dubiously.

"Of course, all grown-ups do!" Pam explained; "that's all right, but when a girl just a few years older than we are does it, well, I think she needs a rough-house."

"We'll get her to go for a walk with us, and when we get her to the pond we'll just plain duck her. I think I don't like her at all," Joy concluded, "and I know Joe would hate her."

In the house Flora was trying to suggest tactfully to Gloria that she omit powder and

rouge during her visit, and was finding it a difficult task.

"Oh! Aunt Flora, you are so old-fashioned, like mother," the girl protested; "All the girls in our set do it, so why shouldn't I?"

"Does your mother approve?" Flora asked.

"Well, no, she doesn't," Gloria admitted.

"You see, just between ourselves, I bought this powder and rouge at the station after mother left me with father, and he thought I was buying magazines; and I put it on, on the train. But mother will have to get used to it sooner or later. All the girls do it, Aunt Flora," she reiterated.

Flora caught the eager girlish note in her voice, and was somehow sorry for her.

"Well, dear," she said kindly, "I may be old-fashioned, but you'll admit that Joy is too young to make-up, so please put away your rouge and powder until you leave here."

"Oh! all right," said Gloria, none too graciously; she was thinking that she was in for a particularly uninteresting time during her stay with her Aunt Flora.

"Are there any movies around here?" was her next question.

"Yes, I thought we might go to-night."

Flora replied. "Mr. Hotchkiss is coming for us; he's Pam's father, you know."

"Is he nice?" asked Gloria, "and Aunt Flora, can't I put on a tiny bit of powder, my nose is so shiny."

"If you want Mr. Hotchkiss to heartily disapprove of you, you may," said Flora shortly.

Outside on the wicker table, the last vestige of cookies had disappeared, and the children sat on the ground, and watched the house.

"If we don't catch her to-day, we won't have another chance!" Ted exclaimed, angrily.

"Oh, I'm tired of waiting for her; let's go home," Bob said.

"Why can't we do it to-morrow?" Pam asked.

"Mrs. Payton will make her take it off, see if she doesn't," Ted replied.

"I'll get her, and ask her to go for a walk with us," Pam suggested.

"That wouldn't be very sporty, ask her out, and then duck her," Bob protested; "I guess we'll just have to wait for a chance."

And chance favored them. Flora went about some household duties, and Gloria, left to herself, decided she would go out and see

if there were any more cookies at the lawn tea party, also further inspect her young cousin.

She walked leisurely across the lawn, the children waiting for her expectantly.

"Hello, there! Don't you infants want to take me for a walk, and show me the place," she asked, when she saw there were no more cookies.

They jumped to their feet quickly.

"Oh, yes, come and see the pond," Pam invited.

The rest chuckled and the unsuspecting Gloria started off with them, as they closed in around her like a cordon of police.

"You'd better take my hand, Joy," Gloria advised, "I don't want any gypsies jumping out of the bushes to steal you while I'm along."

"Don't be silly," said Joy, coldly.

"That's all very well for you to say, but I know the gypsies kidnaped you, and you are afraid of their vengeance if you tell on them. I see it all," and Gloria looked about her suspiciously.

Joy bided her time for they were nearing the pond.

"Now," said Bob as they reached its edge;

he was by common consent the ringleader; "you've got to kneel down and make a vow to us."

"Why, you silly boy, I won't do anything of the kind," she said, looking at him disdainfully.

"Tackle her, Ted," Bob commanded, and by the simple trick of knocking her knees from under her, the boys brought her to the ground.

"I don't like hurting girls," said Bob, "but I'll hurt you again if you don't do what I say."

"Let me up! let me up!" cried Gloria, but her guard kept her down.

"Vow never to use white stuff on your face till you are forty," Bob commanded; "we're going to wash off what's on it now."

And the four proceeded to wash it off. They were not gentle, and before long Gloria was crying.

"Baby," said Pam, but the boys stopped.

"Can't make a girl cry," said Ted. "Got to stop now; will you promise?"

"Yes," said the damp Gloria, "anything."

"Then say after me, 'I, Gloria Payton, vow never to use white or red stuff on my face until I am forty.'"

"Oh please," sobbed Gloria, "let me say twenty."

"All right, twenty then."

The vow was made, and they let her up. She did not wait for her escort, but ran away, her tear-stained face in her arm as she fled to the house.

"Now," sighed Bob, "we'll catch it from Mrs. Payton and Mom, but, oh! boy, it was worth it."

CHAPTER XIV

THE CULPRITS

JOY, what have you done to Gloria?" Flora asked as Joy, after bidding her guests good-by, entered the front hall. "She just rushed upstairs crying."

Joy looked at her mother's face, and decided to make a clean breast of it.

"Well, you see, Mummy, it was this way. I didn't like the rouge and powder she had on her face so I took her down to the pond and washed it off," said Joy, intent on taking the entire blame on her own small shoulders.

"And what did the others do?" asked Flora, amused.

"Oh, they helped a little," Joy admitted reluctantly.

"Yes, I think I understand. Well, I don't approve of young girls powdering," her mother replied; "but don't you realize that Gloria is your guest, and as such must be treated with consideration, no matter what she does."

"But she said she came to see you, Mummy ;

she said I was just a kid, and it isn't as if you had done it, don't you see?"

Flora laughed in spite of herself. "Yes, I see, but it wasn't a nice thing to do, and you children shouldn't have done it. I'm afraid you'll have to tell Gloria you're sorry."

"But, Mummy dear, I simply couldn't," Joy protested.

Flora looked positively frightened. "I suppose I'll have to make her," she said to herself, "but how under the sun am I going to do it?"

"Joy, you must," she said firmly.

"No," said Joy, "I can't."

"But why can't you?"

"Because I'm not sorry; I'm glad I did it, and I wish I had put a hoptoad down her back; I would if I'd thought of it."

"But Joy, you can say you're sorry; you really must remember that Gloria is a guest."

"But Mummy, I can't tell a lie, can I?"

"Oh! dear, I don't know what to do," said Flora, and tears stood in her eyes. "Well, I'll leave you to think it over; I must go up to Gloria. You know Mr. Hotchkiss and Pam are coming back to dinner with the Colonel, and what will they say when they hear you have been so naughty?"

"They'll understand," said Joy, and Flora left the room wondering if this were so.

She found Gloria a huddled heap of misery on her bed, and tried to comfort her.

"I know all about it, my dear, and indeed I am very, very sorry," she said.

"Oh! Aunt Flora, wasn't it just too terrible; and they are nothing but kids. I think Joy should be spanked."

"I never spank Joy, but I shall see that she apologizes to you," Flora promised.

Gloria dried her eyes, and looked at her aunt. "Do you suppose I have to keep that vow?" she inquired.

"Well, a vow is a vow; I think perhaps you'd better keep it."

"But it's so terrible," Gloria wailed. "Just think of not being able to powder your nose until you are twenty. I wish I had said eighteen."

"Well, you'll just have to make the best of it," said Flora, trying to hide a smile; "and now, my dear, get dressed: remember we are going to the movies to-night."

"Are you going to let Joy go?" Gloria asked.

"I think so," said Flora evenly.

The Colonel was the first to arrive for din-

ner. When he was comfortably settled in his favorite armchair, Flora told him the whole story.

"By Gad! the little imps, and what a lesson!" he exclaimed when he had heard it. "I hope, Flora, you didn't scold the child."

"But of course I did, Colonel, I had to. Gloria is a guest of Joy's, and she must be made to realize that one can't be rude to one's guests."

"Fiddlesticks!" returned the Colonel; "they did just right, guest or no guest."

At this point in the conversation the telephone rang. Flora rose to answer it.

"How do you do, Mrs. Root," the Colonel heard her say; "oh,, but you mustn't," she continued after a minute's pause. "Colonel Tracy is here, and he says the children did just right. Please don't punish the boys; they played so nicely with Pam and Joy all day. I'll make Joy apologize, and then we'll just forget the whole matter. While I'm thinking of it, I'm giving a party for the children on Saturday, and I do want you to come and bring Edna and the boys." There was another pause, and then Flora finished with: "Oh! that will be awfully nice; do come early. Good-by, and be sure not to punish the twins."

"There, are you satisfied?" she asked the Colonel; "but I shan't decide about Joy until I see Mr. Hotchkiss."

Almost on the heels of this Geoffrey Hotchkiss was announced.

"Mrs. Payton, what can I say?" he began.

"Where's Pam?" the Colonel interrupted.

"I left her home to think over her wickedness." Mr. Hotchkiss laughed in spite of himself.

"Well, I call that an outrage," fumed the Colonel.

"Oh, I knew you'd be firm," said Flora, a note of admiration in her voice. "I was just waiting to see you."

"Stuff and nonsense," said the Colonel.

Geoffrey Hotchkiss looked from one to the other, and broke into a hearty laugh.

"Pam refused to say she's sorry," he chuckled; "I gave her the choice between that, and staying home, so what else could I do?"

"Why should she apologize?" demanded the Colonel.

"Because she was rude to Mrs. Payton's guest," said Mr. Hotchkiss, as if that settled it.

"Joy won't apologize either," Flora ad-

mitted; "so she shall have her supper served in her room, and not go to the movies."

"Outrageous," spluttered the Colonel.

Joy accepted her fate stolidly. She did not much care about going to the movies without Pam anyway, and she had learned in a hard school to make the best of things.

Pam, on the contrary, rebelled.

"Sniffs, it's not fair!" she announced to the patient Miss York.

"But my dear you were very naughty," said Miss York; "no matter how trying they are, one always has to be polite to guests."

"Oh! you are no comfort at all; but down inside aren't you sorry for me, Sniffs? Anyway you'll eat your dinner up here in the playroom with me, won't you?" Pam coaxed.

"Your father said you were to eat alone, with just bread and milk, Pam, and I must obey his orders."

"Very well," said Pam, "you'll be sorry."

Miss York knew when it was wise to retreat. She could never withstand Pam's wheedling, so she left at once, closing the door reluctantly behind her.

Eight o'clock chimed from the Dresden china clock, and Pam thought of the movies

Then she thought of Joy in her unattractive nursery, and made up her mind.

She opened the door and went to the head of the stairs; she could see one of Miss York's sensibly clad feet just inside the living-room door. Escape by the front way was impossible, so she tiptoed back to her own room, and went over to the window.

A rose trellis came up to the second story. Pam did not take time to consider. She slipped out of the window, caught her foot on one of the slats and proceeded gingerly down to the ground.

Straight as an arrow she darted off across the fields which separated the two houses. Once at the Payton place she stopped irresolutely. If Jane were around she would never let her in.

The living-room was under Joy's. Pam stopped at one of the windows and distinctly heard her father's voice say—

"Play us something else, Miss Gloria; that was charming."

Some one began to play the piano.

"Humph!" said Pam, under her breath, "showing off."

She crept around to the back, and slipped into the kitchen, and had almost reached the



She slipped out of the window.

back stairs when Bridget entered the room.

"Glory be, Miss Pam, what are you doing in my kitchen?" she demanded.

"Oh, Bridget, be a darling, and don't say anything," Pam begged; "I want to see Joy."

"Then up you go, and never a word out of me to anyone," Bridget replied, sympathetically; "and let me tell you this now, it's the Colonel that's on your side entirely."

Pam suppressed a giggle, and slipped up the back stairs. She found Joy laboriously poring over a spelling book. They hugged each other in silence.

"However did you get here?" demanded Joy, in a whisper.

"Climbed out of the window," Pam calmly informed her.

"Oh! Pam, how exciting!"

"And on the way here I thought of something we could do," continued Pam.

"What?" Joy inquired.

"We can make Gloria a pie bed."

"What is a pie bed?" asked Joy, and Pam explained.

"She's a guest," Joy said, after she heard it.

"But that's only a trick."

"It's not like washing her face in the pond, is it?"

"Not exactly, but let's do it anyhow; and if she tells on us I'll never speak to her again," Pam stated.

"I'll have to, just once in a while," said Joy, "if she's here in the house, like asking her to pass the salt, but I won't say a word more than I have to."

A knock sounded at the door, and Pam dived under the bed.

"Come in," called Joy nervously and the door opened slowly.

It was Bridget, and she held in her hands a plate of cakes.

"Here me lambs, I thought you might like this."

"Oh, Bridget, you're a darling," sighed Joy, and Pam came out from under the bed.

They ate the cakes, and then tiptoed to Gloria's room where with the help of Bridget they made a neat pie bed. Just as they returned to the hall, they heard the Colonel and Mr. Hotchkiss saying good night. Pam fled down the back stairs, and ran home, taking the short cut by which she had come.

She was standing on the top bar of the trellis when Mr. Hotchkiss put his key in the

lock. Had he looked up he would surely have seen her; but Mr. Hotchkiss did not look up. His thoughts were in the Payton living-room!

Pam crawled back through the window, and was apparently very sound asleep when a few minutes later he came up to look at her.

CHAPTER XV

DANCING

AND you mean she hasn't told on you yet?" Bob asked.

"Not a word; that is, I don't think so. If she did, Mummy hasn't said anything to me about it," answered Joy.

"I think washing her face did her good," Ted put in.

"Anyway she doesn't paint and powder now," Joy added.

The boys had bicycled over as usual after lessons, and of course they had been told all about the adventures of the night before. They were in Joy's favorite spot, the old lane; but for the moment the bicycle lessons were forgotten.

"Oh! don't let's talk about her any more," Pam went on; "I'd rather talk about the party."

"I don't think much of parties," Bob confessed; "you always have to dance, and I'm no good at it."

"Oh mercy!" Joy and Pam exclaimed together, "we don't know how to dance."

"Mother was thinking of that when she wanted you to come over this afternoon," Ted said.

"Does your mother want us to come over this afternoon?" queried Pam.

"Sure," Ted replied; "only I forgot to tell you about it."

"We'll have to go right straight back and tell Mummy!" Joy exclaimed.

On the way they found Jane coming to look for them.

"Your mother wants you," she told Joy; "the car's waiting, you're all to go over to Mrs. Root's for tea."

"How did you know that?" Ted asked amazed.

"Your mother just called up," Jane replied.

"Pretty good joke on you, Ted," Bob teased, "Mum knew you'd forget it, and you were so sure you wouldn't."

"Well, I got interested in what the girls were saying about the pie bed. Anyway I remembered in time," Ted defended.

Flora greeted them when they reached the house. Gloria was already in the car.

"Hurry upstairs with Jane, girls, and put

on those two fresh dresses I've laid out for you. Pam, you wear one of Joy's, it will just about fit you. Then hurry down again; we're waiting for you. Boys, you will have to leave your wheels here," Flora directed.

Bob laughed; he liked Mrs. Payton, she was so lovely to look at, with her soft, white hair, and girlish face.

"That will give us an excuse to come over and get them to-morrow," he said.

"Come whenever you want to; I think it's so nice of you to want to play with the girls," Mrs. Payton smiled.

"Gee! we like to," Ted replied.

It was not long before the girls raced downstairs again, each in the daintiest of dotted Swiss dresses. Pam threw her arms around Flora.

"Oh! Mrs. Payton, I love this dress, it's so much fluffier than any I have!" she exclaimed.

Mrs. Payton surveyed the exquisite little figure before her and said—

"Then perhaps you won't mind going shopping with me to-morrow; your father wants me to buy you a dress for the party."

"Oh! goody! I was afraid I'd have to wear my pink chiffon, and I hate it."

"No," laughed Flora, "I think we'll give

the pink dress away; pink and your hair would never do. I think we'll find a pale green frock for you."

"Just the color of leaves in Spring; oh! Mummy that will be wonderful; and please buy me a yellow one!" Joy cried, excitedly.

"And let's get them made exactly alike!" Pam exclaimed.

"It would be rather fun to dress you alike," Flora smiled, "then I could pretend I had two daughters."

They got in the car and were driven away, still talking about clothes, much to the boys' disgust.

The Roots house was very old. Ivy almost completely covered the gray stone walls of which it was built. The date above the chimney place in the long low-raftered living-room was 1750.

Mrs. Root stood in the Dutch doorway between the two old-fashioned white seats to welcome them. Some one inside was playing a piano. The whole house seemed to laugh.

"Hello, everybody!" greeted Mrs. Root; "you've quite a large family, haven't you Mrs. Payton?" she teased.

"Rather," Flora replied; "don't you admire my sons?"

"Not a bit; they're both grubby."

"Oh! Mum!" Bob and Ted chorused; "just give us a few minutes, and we'll show you how spruce we can be;" and they ducked under her arms, and disappeared into the house.

The music stopped, and Edna and Marcia Gordon came into the hall.

"How do you do, Mrs. Payton?" they said together; "we're very—" and then they both stopped and laughed.

"You say it," Edna said to Marcia.

"No," Marcia returned, "I'm sure what you were going to say was much the prettier."

"Well anyway," laughed Edna, "we're glad to see you."

"Thank you," said Flora, with her sweetest smile, "I want you to meet Gloria, my niece, Mrs. Root, Miss Root and Miss Gordon."

"Oh! call us Edna and Marcia!" Marcia exclaimed, "we'll never be friends if we start in 'missing' each other."

"Well, just as you like," said Gloria.

"Come in, come in!" cried Mrs. Root; "the reception committee has done it's duty; let's start the dancing class."

"You dance, don't you Gloria?" Edna asked.

"Oh! of course," Gloria replied, with raised eyebrows.

"Well, you help Marcia teach Pam and Joy, and I'll bang the keys."

"What are you going to teach them?" asked Gloria.

"Fox-trot and One-step, that will do for a starter," Marcia replied.

"I'll bet Joy knows how to dance!" Mrs. Root exclaimed, "don't you Joy?"

"Only gypsy dances," Joy replied, blushing a little.

"Oh! dance one!" Edna cried, "I'll play a Hungarian thing I know for you."

Joy looked at her mother, and Flora nodded. The rest waited expectantly.

With her hands on her hips Joy began to sway back and forth in rhythmic measure to the music, and then she danced.

It was like watching an autumn leaf tossed by the wind, grace in every gesture and a sort of longing. Instead of laughing, her audience wanted to cry.

Flora had already discovered that her daughter had a graceful carriage, but she had never before realized she was a born dancer. At last the music ceased, and Joy sank to the floor in a poetic ending.

"How lovely, how indescribably lovely!" cried Mrs. Root. "Joy, my dear child, come here and be kissed."

"Oh! Joy don't do it any more, it makes me sad!" Pam exclaimed.

"I know, sort of a lump comes in your throat," Marcia agreed; "that's because it's so beautiful."

"Where did you learn it? Who taught you?" Flora demanded.

"The gypsies, Sasha mostly. He taught Joe how to play for me to dance. Of course I could never do it as well as Persa or Sybil, but I loved it."

"Can you dance any more like it?" Mrs. Root demanded.

"Oh! yes, but please don't make me to-day; I want to learn to One-step so I can dance at the party Saturday."

"One-step after that; gracious! what a come-down," laughed Edna.

"Dance one more dance for us, and we'll teach you anything you like," Marcia promised.

"Well, a Russian gypsy taught me one that goes like this," and Joy sank to her heels, and danced a jolly Russian peasant dance.

In the middle of it the boys came in with clean suits, and faces that shone.

"Oh! say, Joy, teach me how to do that, will you?" Bob demanded; "it looks awfully good fun."

"Not to-day, it's getting late, and we must learn the One-step; it won't be hard for Joy to do it," Edna pointed out.

But curiously enough it was Pam who distinguished herself at the new dances. She was almost as graceful as Joy, and fell into the fox-trot with easy abandon.

At first Gloria watched, and said nothing. The day was a revelation to her. Apparently these girls didn't mind playing with Joy and Pam, 'though they were two years their seniors; and worst of all she had failed to impress them at all. She was a little sullen at first, but she soon gave it up, and joined in with the rest.

She admired Edna and Marcia a lot, and even though their naturalness made her self-conscious, she wished with all her heart she could be as happy as they were.

The lesson ended when Marcia declared that Joy and Pam could take their places with the best the countryside had to offer; and the boys who showed a new and startling eager-

ness not to be outdone by the girls gave a creditable performance.

Tea came, and there was lots to talk about. It never seemed as though Mrs. Root nor Mrs. Payton were in the way. They were the best of fun, and kept the laughter ringing.

"We must have a lot of parties like this," Mrs. Root said, as she saw them into their motor; "and I want to see Joy dance again soon."

"Good-by Gloria; see you Saturday."

"Good-by Marcia, Edna!"

"Good-by *everybody!*" shouted Bob, as the car moved away.

The next morning there were no lessons, and a day's shopping was the reason. Mr. Hotchkiss had thrown himself upon Mrs. Payton's mercy, and begged her to buy some suitable dresses for Pam. As a man he was hopeless at making selections and although Miss York was the best of governesses her imagination did not run beyond pink and blue; and Pam in pink, especially the garish shade of pink that Miss York selected was a sight that even Mr. Hotchkiss shuddered over.

The day was a complete success. Pam came home with dainty dimities of green and one of lavender; and Joy with maize and rose.

Home at last, and on the front steps waiting for them were Bob and Ted who had come over for their bicycles. They played for what remained of the summer afternoon.

"How can I thank you for doing this for me, Mrs. Payton?" Geoffrey Hotchkiss said that evening.

"Nonsense, don't try to thank me," Flora replied; "I adore Pam, and it is so wonderful having the children such friends. How are they getting on with their lessons, does Miss York say?"

"Miss York says they are both brilliant pupils;" Mr. Hotchkiss chuckled, "but she adds timidly that she wishes they had a little more application."

"Poor Miss York!" laughed Flora, and then they talked of other things.

CHAPTER XVI

THE PARTY

THE night before the party Joy found it impossible to sleep. Her bed had been moved out to the sleeping porch, and through the wire screen she could see the stars twinkling in the bed of black night.

After a very long time dawn came, a glorious, rosy dawn that promised a beautiful day. Joy was up and dressed before six o'clock. Anxiety beset her. Would all these new strange children that were coming to the party have a good time? Would they like her, and would she like them? She suddenly felt very lonely.

"I know what I'll do," she said to herself, "I'll go wake up Pam."

She crossed the fields and approached the Hotchkiss place noiselessly. She tossed a pebble up at Pam's window, and Pam appeared fully dressed.

"Down in a minute," she whispered, "I couldn't sleep either," she admitted later as

they strolled off across the lawn. "Isn't it a lovely day for the party?"

"Pam, what are we going to do with all those children; maybe they won't have a good time at all?" Joy complained.

"Nonsense, people always have a good time at parties. There are games, and all sorts of things," Pam replied.

"Yes, I know, ice cream and cake, but suppose all the girls are like Gloria?"

"But they won't be," Pam comforted; "think how really nice Marcia and Edna are."

"I suppose so," Joy replied dubiously.

They discussed the party from all angles until breakfast-time. Mr. Hotchkiss coming out to find his morning paper saw them with their heads together under the willow tree.

"Well, you *are* early birds," he greeted them. "Joy, you'd better stay to breakfast. I'll call up your mother; I know she wants you out of the way this morning."

"Oh! that will be fun; I never had breakfast with Pam before; but why does Mummy want me out of the way? I thought she wanted Pam and me to help her with the party," Joy replied.

"Indeed, not," laughed Mr. Hotchkiss, "your mother and I are running this affair.

and it's to be as much of a surprise to you as to the rest of the children. You mustn't leave our place this morning and when you go home after luncheon you are to go by way of the field, and in by the back door, looking neither to the right nor to the left."

"But, Pops, we don't have lessons this morning, do we?" Pam demanded, "it's Saturday."

"Of course you do, you've a day to make up."

Pam was about to protest, but Joy said soothingly, "Oh! come on, Pam we might as well; it will help pass the time."

It is to be feared that Miss York found them less attentive than usual as the hours dragged slowly by.

"I don't see why," said Pam, "that if all the numbers that nine goes into makes nine why all the ones eight goes into don't make eight. It would be so much easier if they did. I just hate eight."

"Oh! I don't; I just love it," Joy defended; "the only number that makes me mad is ten, it's so silly and easy."

"But girls," said the unimaginative Miss York, "numbers are just numbers, they're all the same."

"No, they are not," Pam contradicted, "now seven I adore; do you like five, Joy?"

"Yes, because it sings," said Joy.

Miss York looked at them in wonder and amazement. She hadn't the remotest idea what they were talking about. Joy and Pam began to chant the five times table.

"I wish we were doing fractions," Joy remarked, "Bob and Ted are, and I'm tired to death of long division."

"I was tired of arithmetic before I began it," Pam sighed; "now reading I love."

"Let's have reading now," Joy begged; "and do give us something hard."

"But you couldn't read it if I did, my dear," Miss York complained; "read this about the birds."

Joy read the selection through without a mistake. Pam followed her. She read blithely on without looking at the book once, unconsciously imitating even Joy's intonation. That was the way it always was. Joy would dig for a thing, and figure it out for herself; Pam would hear it once and know it parrot fashion.

Luncheon came as a welcome relief. Mr. Hotchkiss came home about one o'clock. He

looked tired and very hot. There were pine needles on his coat.

"Why, Pops, where have you been?" Pam demanded.

"Where haven't I been is more like it," laughed Mr. Hotchkiss; "but you'll find out in good time. Joy, your mother wants you home at once, and mind you go in by the back way."

Joy promised, and set off.

"You'll come over the very moment you are dressed, won't you, Pam?" she called back over her shoulder.

She went in by the back way, and kept her eyes steadfastly on the ground before her.

Dressing for the first time assumed importance. After a sponge bath she put on all her dainty new clothes, and Jane brushed her hair until it shone.

When she came back from the gypsies her hair had been straggly and long, but Flora had had it bobbed with a straight black bang. Her pale yellow dress was vastly becoming. It brought out all the piquancy of her small live face.

Joy was not a beautiful child in the sense that Pam was; but she had a singular charm

of feature that promised beauty later on, and her eyes were lovely.

"Jane," she said, as she looked down at her feet, "I adore my pumps."

"You look very nice I'm sure," Jane surveyed her with secret admiration; she did not believe in flattering the young.

With cook it was another thing. "Sure it's grand you look, darlin'," she said as Joy tripped down into the kitchen.

"I suppose I can't go into the living-room," Joy said, excitedly; "so I'll just have to stay here with you Bridget."

"And why can't you?" asked Bridget, "sure it's outside the surprise is."

"Outside! where?" Joy exclaimed.

"That would be telling," Bridget teased, and Joy could learn nothing further.

Pam arrived, looking wholly beautiful. The pale green of her dress brought out the copper of her hair; her eyes sparkled, and her color was high from excitement.

Gloria met them in the living-room. She was a pretty girl, and looked well in a fluffy lavender georgette.

"I have been picking flowers all the morning, and I'm dead tired. Does the room suit your majesties?" she asked.

The girls looked about them. Flowers were everywhere, the rugs were removed for dancing and the hard wood floor shone like a polished mirror.

"Oh! Gloria, it looks perfectly lovely!" Joy exclaimed, and Pam much to her own surprise hugged the older girl.

Gloria flushed with pleasure.

"How about the dining-room?" asked Joy; "are there any flowers in there?"

"Not one," laughed Gloria, "we're not going near the dining-room."

"Where are we going to eat?" Pam demanded.

"That's a secret," Gloria told her.

Flora joined them. She looked radiant in a mauve chiffon dress, with stockings and slippers to match. Her soft white hair piled high on her head was relieved by a black Spanish comb.

It was not long before some of the guests began to arrive. As might have been expected the Roots came first.

"My dear, I couldn't get away to help you this morning. Such a calamity! I didn't think we'd get here at all. The boys in their keenness for cleanliness let the bathtub overflow and the kitchen ceiling fell." Mrs. Root

told this as though it were the greatest joke imaginable.

"And it almost landed on the cook's head," Bob added, seriously, "if it had we wouldn't have been here now."

"No, it would have killed her sure," Ted remarked.

"Cheerful conversation for a party, I must say," Edna observed laughingly; and they all joined her.

Marcia Gordon came next, to be followed by the Betts family, a lanky girl of thirteen, and a roly-poly boy of nine. On their heels came the Lawfords, two boys of fourteen and fifteen who looked very much bored because their mother had insisted upon their coming to a kids' party. They were immediately taken with Gloria.

Last of all came the Talcotts. Merry Talcott whose real name was Mercy, but who could not possibly be called anything so solemn, was eleven years old, a fat, jolly little blonde. Her two brothers, thirteen and fourteen, adored her. They were handsome boys, and their nicknames of Dandy and Spruce exactly suited them. Merry brought life into the party the moment she entered the room.

"Hello, everybody!" she greeted; "what a

lot of fun this party is going to be. When do we dance, Mrs. Payton?" she asked, after she had been introduced.

"Why this very minute if you want to," Flora replied. "Miss York is here, and she is going to play for you."

Miss York took her place at the piano, and started playing "Pop goes the Weazel." The children stared at her. This was the queerest kind of jazz they had ever heard.

"Oh, dear, I'm afraid this won't do at all," sighed Flora to herself. "Do you know any jazz, Miss York? I know it's horrid to ask you to play it, but it's the only thing these children can dance these modern dances to."

Miss York shook her head, "I'm afraid I don't," she said, "I know only some old waltzes."

"We don't need the piano; you have a Victor," Mrs. Root had come over to join in the conference.

"But I haven't any dance records," Flora replied; but Mrs. Root was already outside the door.

"Edna, play until I get back," she commanded as she left the room.

Poor Miss York was almost in tears as she gave up her seat.

"I shouldn't have told you I could play," she said regretfully.

"Nonsense," laughed Flora, "you play the things I like, and when the children go you must stay and play me the Blue Danube. Now sit down here and be comfortable."

Pam and Joy had been watching the whole affair. Now Pam came forward and put her arms around Miss York.

"Never mind, Sniffs; I liked the piece you were playing," she said loyally.

"So did I," Joy added.

Edna started a lively fox-trot, and the seven couples danced according to their various abilities.

The door-bell rang. It was Mr. Hotchkiss, and with him was a shy awkward boy of twelve.

"I found this youngster sitting out on the steps, too timid to come in," he told Flora in an undertone; "he confided to me that he hated parties but that his mother had made him come. What shall we do with him?"

"Does he know any of the other children?" Flora inquired, and went forward to find out. "I'm afraid I don't know your name," she greeted him smilingly.

"Stephen Winthrop," the boy told her,

putting one foot on top of the other, and offering her a limp damp hand.

"Do you know any of the girls and boys here?" Flora went on.

"Sure, that is, yes ma'am, I mean yes, Mrs. Payton," he stammered.

The music stopped, and Edna swung around on the piano stool.

"Hello! Steve," she called as the others crowded around him.

"Here's the boy to play the piano, Mrs. Payton," said David Lawford; "he can jazz anything." David had been dancing with Gloria and was beginning to enjoy himself.

"Ah, shut up Dave, can't you," Stephen muttered.

"Why, how nice," said Mrs. Payton, "that will give Edna a chance to dance."

"Naw, I don't want to play, that is, excuse me," Stephen replied, and blushed.

"Well, come and help me anyhow," Edna suggested coaxingly.

"Oh! I might play a bass like the drums," Stephen conceded.

They started a One-step and his accompaniment made it sound like a whole band.

When Mrs. Root returned with an armful of records they would have none of them.

Edna good-naturedly sat upon the piano stool until four-thirty; then Geoffrey Hotchkiss lined them all up and handed them each the end of a piece of string tagged with their name.

"Now, then, follow this to the end and see what you find," he said, and they started off.

Some went through the long French windows, some through the front door, and others even through the cellar; but they all ended up at a grove of pine trees across the lawn from the house. There a web of string confronted them. Each strand led from tree to tree and from branch to branch and in the center of it all stood the table decorated in yellow and white.

Bob was the first one to come to the end of his string. It had led him to a paper pie in the middle of the table. The others were not long in following, and they found themselves each at a seat marked by a place card.

"Now pull," said Flora, laughing, for it had been a merry chase.

They pulled, and out came little long velvet boxes. The girls opened theirs with shrieks of delight. They found silver bar pins with little bunnies in relief. The boys found stick

pins of foxes' heads, and were as delighted as the girls.

"Some class," said Ted, and he stuck his in his blue and yellow tie; the others followed suit.

The girls pinned theirs on their frocks, and then everybody sat down for refreshments.

There were chicken patties, apple salad and ice cream and cake. Merry and Joy sat with Bob between them, and talked across him.

"Joy Payton, I never had such a good time at a party in my whole life before!" Merry exclaimed.

"Aren't parties always as nice as this?" asked Joy.

"I should say not," Merry replied; "to tell you the truth, parties are usually dull. I've been to dancing school of course, but I never went to a party where they danced before, and this spider's web, well it's just the best fun ever."

"Merry," said her brother Dandy, across the table warningly.

"Oh! hush up, Dandy," Merry replied, and leaning across Bob she explained to Joy, "Dandy says that when he wants me to keep still; you see I talk too much."

"I should say you did," said Bob, "I

haven't been able to get a word in edgewise; but girls always talk too much," and he shot a reproachful glance at Joy, which was unjust, for she had had hardly time to reply to Merry's steady chatter.

All at once Spruce Talcott rose from his place and rapped three times on the table.

"Mrs. Payton, may I make a speech?" he asked.

"Why, of course, Spruce," Flora replied.

She, with Mrs. Root and Mr. Hotchkiss were helping to serve the supper.

"Very well, then," Spruce went on, and coughed, "Ladies and gentlemen we are all members of the K. C. C. except Joy Payton, Pam Hotchkiss and Gloria Payton, I vote we take them in as members right now."

"Oh," sighed Merry, "how heavenly."

Joy and Pam looked at each other, and then at Spruce. They knew some honor was being conferred upon them, but they were not sure what it was.

"What," asked Pam, timidly, "is a K. C. C.?"

"'Tisn't an *a* it's a *the*," Spruce told her. "It means Kick the Can club. We have meetings once a week at different houses, and we play Kick the Can."

Pam was too overcome to ask more.

"The first meeting is Thursday," Dandy put in.

"Keep still, Dandy, I'm president of this club," Spruce reminded him.

"Well, I guess I'm secretary," said Dandy, but he subsided.

"The meeting is to be at our house," Bob announced, and Spruce nodded condescendingly.

"Save your tin cans everybody," said Ted, and everybody laughed.

Gloria arose with much dignity from her place at the table.

"I regret, Mr. President," she said, mincing her words, "that I will be unable to accept the honor; for I return home on Monday. Thanks ever so much just the same," she added.

"Oh well," said Spruce, "we'll make you an honorary member;" for he had not been greatly impressed by Gloria.

The arrival of the automobiles broke up the party. Everybody said good-by with regret. Joy's first party had been a tremendous success.

CHAPTER XVII

THE FOREST OF ARDEN

THE girls had just returned with something like relief from seeing Gloria off.

It was good to be by themselves again; Gloria and her grown-up airs had acted as a damper upon their lively spirits.

"The trouble with parties is that it is always so dull after they are over!" Pam exclaimed. It was the Monday following the party.

"I know it," said Joy, "but you've got it to think about. I dreamed last night I was hiding in a big can, and that Dandy and Spruce were kicking it. When I woke up I was on the floor."

"I always have funny dreams," Pam replied; "but Pops says that's because I let Soney sleep on my feet."

"Where is Soney?" asked Joy, "let's take him for a run."

"All right, let's go back to my house," Pam replied, for they had been playing at Joy's.

"I wish," said Joy, wistfully, "that you

liked horses better, I just love to play in your barn; it's the most gorgeous place for hide and seek."

"Oh! I suppose you want to give Wild Horse a lump of sugar as usual," Pam said.

"What made your father name him Wild Horse?" Joy asked.

"Because he's the friend of man. Didn't anybody ever read you the Just-So stories, about Wild Dog and Wild Horse and the Cat that walked by Himself?"

"No," sighed Joy, "no one ever did."

"Well, this afternoon we'll go and see Wild Horse if you want to," Pam said, resignedly; "then let's get Sniffs to go out in the woods with us, and she can read out loud. You'll love How the Elephant Got His Trunk."

"Will I," said Joy, "I've always wondered how."

She went into the kitchen to beg three lumps of sugar from Bridget and they set off for the Hotchkiss place.

"If we are going to have ponies," said Joy, "you've got to get used to feeding them sugar," and she handed Pam one of the lumps.

"Feed this to Wild," she said.

Pam took it, and closed her small hand over it hard; her face went white. She was deathly

afraid of horses, and it was little wonder, for she had been kicked, as she once explained to Joy. But she didn't want Joy to think her a baby.

"You give it to him first," she said, putting off the evil moment.

Joy walked up to the comfortable box stall, and Wild put his head over the top inquiringly.

"Hello! beautifulest," she greeted, and held out the palm of her hand with the lump of sugar on it.

Wild ate the sugar, and then nozzled her shoulder, looking for more.

"Now give him your piece," she said to Pam.

Pam held out her hand as far as she could reach, with her palm rigid, but as Wild brought his mouth near it her hand instinctively closed.

"Don't do that," Joy cried out; "he might bite your finger by mistake."

"Oh! you give it to him," said Pam, disgustedly. "I suppose I'm a baby, but I can't seem to help it."

"Pam, you've *got* to; if we have to stay here all day, and Wild eats all of your fingers, you've got to feed him that sugar."

"Very well," said Pam, "I'll do it this time."

She held out her hand, and closed her eyes tight. Wild sniffed and took the sugar, and Pam pulled her hand back hurriedly.

"There, I did it!" she said triumphantly.

"It wasn't so bad, was it?" Joy asked.

"Awful," replied Pam.

Joy gave him her last piece, and kissed him good-by. They went up to the house and found Miss York darning stockings in her own particular sitting room.

"Oh! Sniffs, wouldn't it be nice to pack a basket with tea things, and go out in the woods for supper?" Pam asked, wheedlingly.

"It might rain," said Miss York dubiously.

"Oh! but it won't," Joy replied with assurance, "there isn't a drop of rain in the whole sky; please Sniffs let's go."

Miss York put away her darning resignedly.

"And bring the Just-So stories with you," added Pam.

Once out in the sunshine Joy led the way. They went across the fields until they struck the old lane. She found a path that she knew and followed it. It led haphazardly over a stone wall, down a little hill, and ended abruptly in a dell. A tiny brook habbled along

under the young trees, and the moss-covered stones that edged it.

"What a heavenly spot!" exclaimed Pam.

"Soncy, don't chase that chipmunk. Oh! he's frightened him," Joy said, ruefully; "wait, perhaps I can coax him back."

"You could if you had a nut," said Pam.

"I've got almost as good," Joy laughed, and she opened the hamper and broke a piece off of one of the peanut butter sandwiches.

"But a chipmunk won't eat peanut butter, dear child," Miss York protested.

"Wait," said Joy, "and Pam, you hold Soncy."

She made a funny little clucking sound with her tongue and the chipmunk stopped in his flight up the tree trunk. Joy went on, and very slowly the little animal crept down the tree, curiosity in every inch of his tail.

Joy held out the peanut butter in her hand, and did not move, the chipmunk came nearer and nearer.

"Well, take it, silly," said Joy gently. The little fellow eyed it suspiciously, then darted at it, stored it away in his cheek and then dashed up the tree again.

"Why Joy, how wonderful!" exclaimed Miss York.

"Now I'll feed the birds," said Joy.

She whistled, and in a few seconds there came an answer, just a note or two, up in the trees. Joy crumbled some bread in her hand and laid it palm up on the moss.

It was tedious work, but she kept at it. Joe had taught her infinite patience. At last a meadow lark swooped down and came to rest upon the ground about five feet from her. It hopped gingerly toward the crumbs, pecked at them, and flew away with one to a little distance. Finding it good it came back for more, until finally almost all the crumbs had disappeared. Suddenly it flew away before the last one had gone.

"Somebody's coming," said Joy, and a minute later they heard feet tramping through the underbrush on the other side of the brook.

"Hello! there's some one here already," they heard a familiar voice say.

The trees hid the speaker, but another voice farther off called, "Oh bother, can't you send them away; it's *our* favorite tree?"

They recognized the voice as Merry Talcott's and a second later Dandy pushed his way into sight. He took in the situation at a glance, and before Joy or Pam could speak, he put his finger to his lips to motion silence.

"Who is it?" came in a stage whisper from Merry.

"A couple of tramps," said Dandy, "they are both sound asleep; come and see for yourself."

"But don't make a noise; you might wake them up and then they will chase us!" Merry exclaimed, and an older voice said timidly—

"Perhaps we'd better go somewhere else to-day, children."

"Nonsense," said Dandy, with a chuckle, "come and look at them anyhow. Hear 'em snore?"

At the word, "asleep," Joy and Pam had thrown themselves on the ground, and at Dandy's suggestion they snored lustily.

Merry's face appeared under Dandy's arm. She was wearing an old straw hat rakishly over one ear.

"Oh! she exclaimed rapturously, "two really fine tramps; come and look, Mabs."

Mrs. Talcott pushed her way through the bushes that screened her view.

"Why," she cried, "you fooled me this time, but I'll get even with you, see if I don't."

Joy and Pam sat up.

"Hello!" they called together.

Dandy helped his mother across the brook, and made the introductions.

"Mabs, this is Miss York," he said, bowing, "and these two sprites are Joy and Pam; shall we let them stay in the Forest of Arden?" he turned to the others; "this is my mother, Queen Mabs."

"How do you do?" said Miss York, primly. "Have we intruded on your favorite spot by any mischance?"

"Indeed not," laughed roly-poly Mrs. Talcott; she was a tiny woman, and dressed in a pair of knickers she looked no more than eighteen. She was plump, like Merry, and her small retrousse nose was covered with freckles; her golden hair was bobbed like Merry's.

Her children called her "Mabs" but her name was Geraldine. They all felt immeasurably older than she was, and took the best of care of her.

"It was you who gave that wonderful party, wasn't it?" she asked, shaking hands with Joy.

"It was Pam's party too," Joy told her.

"Of course it was; I was forgetting. What are you reading?" she asked, as she noticed the book.

"It's the Just-So Stories," Pam answered, shyly.

"Oh good!" exclaimed Merry, who had kept still as long as was humanly possible for her. "Isn't it just too thrilling, finding you here. I think there'll be enough cake in the hamper to go 'round; and there are just loads of potatoes, how about the bacon, Mabs?"

"Merry, stop it, or I'll duck you in the brook," threatened Dandy.

"I wasn't talking too much," Merry denied, hotly.

"Children, stop your fussing," Mrs. Talcott said, calmly; "where do you suppose Spruce is?"

"We've got a tea, too," Joy announced.

"Then we can mix everything up!" exclaimed Merry, "and everybody eat everybody else's food. Oh! well, anyhow, you know what I mean."

A loud hello came from the opposite direction. The three Talcotts answered it at once.

"Phew! he ought to hear that," laughed Mrs. Talcott.

Spruce came carrying a large hamper.

"Guests in the Forest; and my hat! if it isn't she of the grandiferous party. Your

turn next to carry the hamper, Dandy, and don't you forget it," said the president of the K. C. C.

"Yes, isn't it just too—"

"Merry!" thundered Dandy.

"I've only said three words," protested Merry.

"Five!" corrected Dandy, "and you would have made it two hundred and five if I hadn't stopped you."

"Well, maybe," admitted Merry, honestly.

"No fire," stormed Spruce, "what this family would do without me, I shudder to think. Twigs, everybody, twigs! Sit down, Mabs, and take your queenly rest beside Miss York."

"Oh! let me help!" exclaimed Miss York, struggling to her feet.

"Not a jot," Spruce commanded; "you don't know the rule of the Forest," he went on to explain. "I'm the King to-day because I carried the basket—sort of makes up for it, see? And I give all the orders, so if you don't mind I'll order you to sit down."

"You'd better sit, Miss York," Mrs. Talcott advised, "I may as well tell you that the penalty for disobedience is being ducked in the brook."

Miss York subsided, too fluttered for speech.

"Come on, you two, get up and gather twigs for the fire." Joy and Pam scuttled off into the wood with Merry. When they came back Dandy and Spruce built a fire, and though the potatoes were badly burned, with lots of pepper, salt and butter they tasted delicious.

The pots and pans were kept in a hollow tree and so were the sticks on which the bacon was broiled or burned according to who did it.

Spruce took the best care of Pam, and broiled her share for her. In exchange he ate most of her sandwiches. Dandy made tea for his mother and Miss York. The others had milk, which had been chilled in the brook.

After the dishes were washed and hidden away in the hollow tree, Merry demanded a story.

"Let's ask Miss York to read us one," suggested Mrs. Talcott.

"Oh! no, please; you do it, Mrs. Talcott," Miss York protested.

"The Cat that Walked by Himself," asked Joy, "I've never heard that."

Mrs. Talcott opened the book and began to read. She had a different voice for each animal and Joy listened enthralled.

Twilight came to the glen before they realized it, and rudely broke up the picnic. They parted at the brook, for the Talcotts went one way and Joy and Pam another.

"As King I invite you to come to the Forest any time you like," was Spruce's farewell; "and say, Pam, bring along some more of those cheese and pineapple sandwiches, will you?"

"Oceans," promised Pam.

"I really think we had better go around by the road; it's dark in the woods," said Miss York as they left the dell.

The children agreed, and they started off, but when they came to the crossroad, Joy stopped suddenly.

There was a branch of oak leaves at the fork!

CHAPTER XVIII

CRICKET AND CLINKER

MY gypsies!" Joy exclaimed; "that is, I think they must be mine, and they've gone past the hollow. Oh! why didn't they stop?"

"Perhaps they are not very far away," Pam said; "anyway we can chase them in the car. I'll tell Pops about it to-night."

They walked on, talking excitedly, while Miss York wondered, for she had always been afraid of gypsies herself. At the entrance to the Payton place they met Mr. Hotchkiss, who had been dining with Flora.

"You two look as though you had discovered a gold mine. Tell me the secret," he begged.

"Oh! Pops, Joy's gypsies have come, and now we can buy our ponies!" cried Pam.

"How do you know?" Mr. Hotchkiss asked.

"I saw the *Patteran* at the crossroads," Joy told him. "Please, please say we can go to see them."

"But how do you know they are your tribe?" Mr. Hotchkiss was wondering what Flora would say.

"I just *feel* they are mine, in my bones," Joy replied.

"Joy," Mr. Hotchkiss said, "would you like to go back to the gypsies?"

"No," Joy answered at once; "but I would love to see them again, and show them Pam."

"Well, I guess that can be arranged; let's go back to the house, and talk to your mother about it," Mr. Hotchkiss replied, gravely.

"Were you coming home so early, Pops?" Pam queried.

Mr. Hotchkiss smiled.

"I was going to get the car and take Mrs. Payton for a little ride," he explained. "But this changes our plans; we'll have to talk about ponies now."

They walked back to the house, and Flora opened the door for them.

"Great news," Geoffrey Hotchkiss told her; "some gypsies are in the neighborhood." Flora's hand went to her heart, as Mr. Hotchkiss watched her keenly. "And we're off tomorrow to see if friend Liubo has two ponies for sale."

"Oh, he has; I know he has!" Joy ex-

claimed, happily. "There's Cricket and Clinker that he traded old Nell for, and he was afraid he'd never get rid of them. Won't he be surprised?"

Flora Payton and Geoffrey Hotchkiss looked at each other for a long minute.

"Do you think it's wise?" Flora asked at last, speaking above the children's heads.

"I think it would be a good test, and it would set your mind at ease," Geoffrey answered.

"Then we'll go," decided Flora.

If Joy was restless the night before the party, she was perfectly wide-awake to-night. Bed was impossible. She got up and looked out of the window. There was not a star in sight, and heavy clouds chased each other across the face of the moon.

Joy's heart sank. She knew the signs of the weather and she knew past all possible doubt that it would rain on the morrow. Of course they wouldn't go. Grown-ups hated rain, and even Pam liked to stay indoors during a thunderstorm because she was afraid, instead of being where she could get the whole glory of it. Joy adored thunderstorms.

She knew, too, that gypsies liked to travel

in the rain because it laid the dust. That would mean they would be going farther and farther away from her. Joy began to cry. Suddenly she found two arms around her and felt her mother beside her.

"Joy, dearest, are you unhappy?" she asked.

"No, Mummy," Joy said, wonderingly; "but I wish it wasn't going to rain tomorrow."

"Do you want to see your gypsies so much? Can't you be content with just Mummy?"

"I love you more than anybody in the world, Mummy," Joy said as she wound her arms about her mother's neck, "but I can't help still loving the gypsies too."

Flora relaxed. "That's all I wanted to know, dear. You're sure you wouldn't want to go back to them?"

"And leave you? Oh, no." Joy was suddenly aghast at the idea. "I'll never, never leave you. Never!"

"Then we shall go to see the gypsies tomorrow, rain or shine," Flora promised.

It did rain, not a hard, beating downpour that would stop after a while, but a thin, misty drizzle that might keep up for days. Mr. Hotchkiss called up in the morning very early.

"I've just been wondering how we are to get those blessed ponies home when we do buy them," he said, "Pam can't ride yet."

"You're weakening," teased Flora; "admit it. It's the rain that's dampened your spirits."

"Never believe it," came Geoffrey's laughing voice from the other end of the wire. "I'm going if I have to paddle the car. But seriously, will they send a boy back with the ponies?"

"Just a second, and I'll ask Joy," Mrs. Payton turned from the telephone.

"Joy, dear, will they send a boy back with the ponies, or will we have to get them ourselves?" she asked.

"Oh! I'll ride one of them home, and lead the other," Joy replied, with assurance; "I've done it often from the fairs."

She seemed so sure of herself that Flora did not want to cast a cloud over her day, so she said gently:

"Wouldn't it be more fun if Joe rode home with us? Then Patrick could take him back in the car to-morrow."

"Oh! Mummy, you do think of the nicest things; that would be wonderful."

Flora had almost forgotten Mr. Hotchkiss

on the other end of the wire. She turned back to the telephone apologetically.

"Sorry, Geoffrey, to have kept you waiting," she said, his first name slipping out before she noticed it.

There was a moment's silence on the other end of the wire and then Mr. Hotchkiss said, "Thank you, Flora." Followed another little silence. "What did the youngster have to say?" he asked.

"Why, she feels equal to bringing them both home herself, and I have no doubt she could do it, but I think we can get Joe to come, too."

"Good enough," Geoffrey replied, "that takes a weight off my mind. I didn't fancy myself riding a Shetland pony before the startled gaze of the multitude, and now if that's all, Pam wants to speak to Joy."

"All right. Good-by, Geoffrey."

"Good-by, Flora."

All Pam wanted to say was that they were going, and wasn't it too thrilling for words?

"Picnic in the rain, whoever heard the like?" Bridget complained; all the while she packed a hamper with chicken sandwiches, and cucumber sandwiches, and filled the thermos bottles with hot chocolate. "Sure

it's your deaths of colds you will be taking."

"Oh! never mind, Bridget, just go on packing; I'm so afraid they will change their minds," Joy implored.

They made an early start, and everybody was in the best of spirits in spite of the rain, which was still coming down steadily. When they came to the crossroads, Joy took command of the expedition.

They followed the gypsy *Patteran* toward the black West. There was no doubt in Joy's mind that a bad storm was brewing, but she wanted to find the gypsies before it broke.

At last below them down a steep hill to the right in a clump of young birches, was a gypsy encampment. Its picturesqueness was marred by its sodden appearance. A little pool of water lay under the tripod where a pot full was boiling in spite of the rain.

"It's my gypsies; I know the tents," Joy sang out; "oh! I knew we should find them."

The car stopped at the side of the road. Joy was out of it in a minute. Sybil saw her first; she was making the stew.

"Run away, little *Gajo*," she said. "Gypsies eat little children."

"But, Sybil, they won't eat me!" Joy laughed, with glee.

"Joy!" Sybil exclaimed. "Joe will go mad with gladness, but what are you doing here? Have you come back to us?"

"Only for a little while," said Joy; "but where are the rest?"

"The women are off to the Fair, but your friend Persa is with Mother Ia in her tent; here come Liubo and Joe now."

Joy hid behind a tree, and as the man and boy came abreast of her she popped out at them. Their surprise was all she wanted it to be.

"Joy, you've come back to us," cried Joe, and Liubo swung her high in the air.

"Little *Gajo*," he teased, "where did you get all those fine clothes? It is good to find you have not forgotten your old friends."

Joy looked at him reproachfully.

"Oh! you know I'd never do that!" she cried, "I love you too much, and I've brought you Mummy and Pam and Mr. Hotchkiss and we want to buy two ponies, and Joe's to ride home with us, and spend the night."

"Not I," said Joe, "what would I do in a *Gajo's* house?"

"Oh! but just for to-night," Joy pleaded, "and bring your fiddle."

Joe looked at his father, hoping he would



Persa was as pretty as ever.

say he couldn't go with Joy in her dainty finery; he resented his own gypsy clothes for the first time in his life.

Mr. Hotchkiss was coming toward them. He greeted Liubo cordially, and without a trace of the condescension that the other hated. They were soon deep in horse talk, and the gypsy chief soon realized that he had met his equal.

Impulsively Joy put out her hand, took Joe's, and half led and half dragged him over to the car.

"Mummy, here's Joe!" she called.

"Oh! Joe, how nice to see you again," responded Mrs. Payton. "Joy knows you so well that I want to know you too; you will come home with us to-night, won't you?"

Joe looked up in her face with every intention of saying "no," but to his surprise, he found himself saying simply, "yes, I will come."

Pam had been staring at him open-mouthed all this time.

"What a perfectly lovely red sash you have on," she said at last.

Joe grinned.

"This is Pam!" Joy explained; "and Joe, you've simply got to like her because she's my

best friend, next to you. Now you stay here and talk while I go see Mother Ia and Persa."

Mother Ia had failed terribly since Joy had seen her last; but Persa was as pretty as ever. Mother Ia could hardly speak, but she kept muttering over and over "all is well with the little *Gajo*, and I am glad, glad."

Persa was persuaded to come back to the car, and Mrs. Payton greeted her graciously.

They saw Liubo coming toward them, leading two shaggy ponies, and Joy danced with glee. Their saddles had been purchased with them, so that they were ready to ride.

"How long are you going to stay here?" Mr. Hotchkiss asked Liubo, who was in the best of spirits.

"Who knows," he replied, shrugging his shoulders.

"Well, can't we keep that boy of yours for a few days?"

"One night only, sir; I need him to help with the horses at the Fair."

"I thought he could teach my daughter how to ride," Geoffrey Hotchkiss said.

"Why Joe? Joy rides just as well, and will make a better teacher," he explained, with a broad smile.

The good-bys were said, and Joy cried a little.

"Liubo, promise me you won't go by our house again without stopping," she begged; "I do miss you so sometimes."

"Very well," replied Liubo, putting his hands on her shoulders, and speaking seriously, "I promise that as long as I am chief we will spend one day and one night at the old camping ground every year. Does that satisfy the little *Gajo*?"

"No," said Joy, "but I'll make it do. Say hello to all the rest of them when they come back from the Fair; and now we have to go."

"Del-o-Del va Xt" (God bless you), said Liubo; "Joe, remember you are a gypsy."

The two children mounted the two ponies while Pam watched them enviously. Mr. Hotchkiss started the car, and drove it as slowly as possible. The ponies did not like the noise of the engine. Joy's Cricket particularly resented it, kicked up his heels, but Joy stuck on. Flora gave a little scream.

"Flora, your daughter is a born horse-woman; look at her stay with that pony!" Geoffrey exclaimed.

Flora only nodded in silence.

Joy remembered suddenly that Joe had for-

gotten to bring his fiddle and she sent him back for it. It was given into Mrs. Payton's keeping.

They had luncheon in a deserted barn under a hayloft, and every time the wind blew, the hayseed came down on the food. Joe was shy at first, but Mrs. Payton soon had him talking about himself. Pam was induced to sit on Clinker's saddle and declared she liked it.

Luncheon over, they resumed their trip, and reached home in time for tea. Jane, who met them at the door, had her ideas about bringing gypsies into the house.

"Such carryings on," she told Cook. "A heathen in the drawing-room. That I'd ever live to see it, and Miss Joy holding his hand."

"It do beat all," Cook replied; "I wonder, now, do them gypsy boys tell fortunes?"

CHAPTER XIX

GYPSY JOE

NOW, Joe, play for us," Mrs. Payton said gently.

Joe never had to be asked twice. He tucked his old violin under his chin, and in an instant the room was transformed into a gypsy camp. The wild sweet music poured forth the longing of his boy's soul in a quivering lament. When he stopped there was dead silence in the room; even the irrepressible Pam was still.

"Oh, Joe!" was all Mrs. Payton could say.

"My boy, you're a wonder," Geoffrey Hotchkiss exclaimed, breathlessly.

"Call the birds, Joe," Joy whispered, her eyes round with delight.

And Joe played melting notes, that would indeed have coaxed the bird from the tree.

"Now, dance, Joy, and I'll play the one you like," and he went off into a rollicking dance.

Joy danced on her heels, throwing her feet out before her, one hand on her hip, the other

on her head. Sasha had taught her, and he had taught her well.

"The Colonel must hear this; I'll call him up," said Flora, and she went to the telephone.

"I'll send the car for you and you simply *must* come," she ended the conversation.

The children played until seven o'clock. At dinner Joe had a hard time of it. He had never seen anyone eat with a knife and fork before, and did not know what it was all about. In the middle of the meal he gave it up and ate with his fingers. He did it so delicately that it was not offensive to anyone but Jane.

"Humph!" she said, behind his chair, and went off to the kitchen in high dudgeon.

After dinner they returned to the living-room, and the Colonel demanded the surprise that Flora had promised him. She stationed Joe in an alcove made by the chimney, and whispered to him to play the same song he had played in the afternoon.

Joe began; then came the haunting melody that held his hearers spellbound. But this time all eyes were on the Colonel. When the music stopped he jumped to his feet.

"Where is the lad? I shall adopt him, and

see that he goes on with his musical education!" he exclaimed.

But Joe had something to say about this.

"I am a gypsy," he said proudly, "and I must live as a gypsy."

"But don't you want to study the violin?" Flora asked, aghast.

"Sasha will teach me," Joe replied, stubbornly, "and some day I will play to great audiences, and the ladies will kiss my hand."

"I won't," said Pam.

"I like the boy's courage, and I like his pride," said the Colonel; "I'll go to-morrow and see his father."

"My father would never let me live with a *Gajo*, and I don't want to live in a house; I tell you I'm a gypsy!" declared Joe.

The Colonel shrugged his shoulders.

"I don't believe the boy's a gypsy," Geoffrey Hotchkiss announced; "look at his hair and eyes; they are only a little darker than Joy's; but all the gypsies we saw at that camp to-day had coarse black hair; and look at his delicate features!"

"I am a gypsy!" Joe protested, angrily; "and Liubo is my father."

"I don't believe it," Geoffrey said under his breath.

"Flora, do you think it would do any good for me to speak to the boy's father?" the Colonel asked.

Flora saw the agonized look in Joe's eyes and answered gently:

"I'd hate to see the boy forced into a life he didn't like. If he's a genius it's sure to come out, no matter what his environment. Why not write your name for him, or give him your card, and tell him if he ever changes his mind to come to you, and you'll take him in."

"Well," sighed the Colonel, "that seems to be the best idea; but I hate not having him now. Who is this Sasha he speaks about?"

"Sasha," said Joe, "is the greatest violinist in the world. He says so."

Joy had been listening eagerly to the above conversation.

"Oh, Joe," she said, "don't you think you could be a *Gajo*? It's really lots of fun."

Joe looked at her fondly.

"For you I could do most things, Joy; but I could never be a *Gajo*."

That ended the discussion for the night. There was more music, and Joy danced for them again.

Joe went up to his room with Mrs. Payton.

It was a pretty room. The curtains were chintz, and the furniture old mahogany. Joe surveyed the four-posted bed dubiously. He had never slept in a bed in his life. He thought it might be rather fun, but he found he only twisted and turned uncomfortably, and toward midnight he pulled his bedding onto the floor near the open windows. He went to sleep at last, and dreamed that he was suffocating. He awoke to stare at the four enclosing walls.

Very softly, so as not to disturb anyone, he got up, dressed, and slipped down to the front porch, threw himself on the hard floor, and in five minutes was in a dreamless sleep.

By five o'clock he was awake again. Joy on her sleeping porch upstairs was wide-awake at the first singing of the birds. She heard Joe walking on the gravel path below, and peeked out of the window. He was going toward the barn. She was dressed in a jiffy and joined him at Cricket's stall.

"Let's go down and wake up Pam, and give her a riding lesson before breakfast," she suggested.

Joe was still harboring a grudge against Pam for her frank refusal to kiss his hand,

so he agreed with little grace, but Joy never noticed it.

"I'll teach her to ride, and if she falls off I'll smack her," he said, fastening the girth under the pony's fat tummy.

"Oh, Joe, you mustn't! Nice boys never slap girls," Joy cried.

"Gypsy boys do," said Joe vain-gloriously, "and I'm a gypsy."

"Oh," said Joy, "I wish you were not."

They crossed the fields to Pam's house in silence, Joy riding the pony, and Joe walking beside her. It took several minutes of throwing pebbles at her window before Pam's sleepy head appeared in the opening.

"I'll be right down," she called, "but don't make so much noise."

Joy and Joe went around to the barn and found John, the hired man, who looked after Mr. Hotchkiss' horse, surveying Clinker.

"As nice a little pony as I ever saw," he said to Joy, "but you'll never get Miss Pam to ride it."

"Oh, yes I will," said Joe, grimly; "just watch me."

Pam joined them after a few minutes' wait.

"Now, then," said Joe, brusquely, "up you

go!" and before Pam realized what was happening, she was in the saddle.

"Now, don't make a fuss," Joe said, crossly. "Clinker never kicks, so there's no need to be frightened."

"But I am frightened," Pam insisted, "I'm scared to death."

Joe paid no attention to her.

"Stick your knees into the saddle, and hold on," he said.

Pam needed no second bidding, but clutched the pony with her sturdy knees, and clung to the bridle. Joe walked the horse around the driveway once, and then he said masterfully:

"This time we run, and if you yell I'll smack you."

On the ground Pam would have defied him, but on the pony's back she was meek and obedient. She made up her mind to being thrown and decided to bear even death without a murmur. Hers was the courage of desperation.

The pony, at Joe's bidding, began to run, a gentle gait. It was a bright, crisp morning, and Clinker felt a little bit skittish. He kicked out his heels in the exuberance of his joy and Pam went over his head and landed on the ground.

Joe stood over her.

"Are you hurt?" he asked calmly.

Pam got up.

"Why, no, I'm not," she said, surprised, "and I was sure it would kill me."

Joe grinned.

"I wanted you to be thrown," he began.

"You mean thing," Pam flared up.

"No, no, I didn't want you hurt," Joe hastened to explain; "but I wanted you to see that it doesn't hurt to be thrown."

"But suppose I had broken my arm," Pam demanded; "I did bruise it."

"Then," said Joe simply, "I would have been sorry. Now get on again."

"What, again?" Pam demanded; "but he'll throw me off just the same way."

"He will if you'll let him," Joe agreed.

"It's easier every time, Pam, truly it is," Joy put in, from her place on Cricket's back, "go on and try."

"All right, but this time I'll die," said Pam, almost in tears. "It's all very well for you to say get on again, you were never thrown."

"Oh, wasn't I?" Joy laughed. "I've been thrown off a big horse's back lots of times, and that hurts because they are so tall."

"Well," said Pam, "you'll both be sorry when I am dead."

She scrambled into the saddle once more, and Joe led her off at a quick walk, changing into a run almost at once. He was secretly comparing her to Joy who had taken her tumbles with hearty laughter, even a big bump on her head one day. Well, there was only one Joy, he decided, as he turned back to his task.

This time Pam stuck until they reached the main road, then she tumbled off again, leaving one foot in the stirrup. Clinker stood still and turned to look at her. She had bumped her head and it hurt.

"I think," she said, "I've had enough for to-day."

"No, you haven't," insisted Joe; "up you get, and this time stay on, or I'll think you are a regular cry baby."

"I haven't cried a single tear," retorted Pam, furiously.

"Well, you want to," Joe teased.

"Oh! I hate you!" Pam told him, but nevertheless she climbed back in the saddle, this time, unassisted, with a vow to stick on at whatever cost.

And she stuck.

It was not a great display of horsemanship

that Mr. Hotchkiss witnessed as he came out onto the veranda, but it was enough to convince him that Pam would some day be a good rider.

As for Pam, when the call came for breakfast she stalked into the house, and refused to say good-by to either Joy or Joe; but she was flushed with triumph.

CHAPTER XX

THE K. C. C.

HAS Joe gone?"

Pam poked her head around the corner of the barn where Joy was feeding Clinker more sugar than was good for him.

"Oh, Pam, have you come to make up?" Joy almost begged. She had been miserably unhappy for the few hours that had passed since Pam flew into the house in a rage; and even Joe could not console her.

"Has he gone?" Pam insisted.

"Yes," Joy told her, "he went hours ago, and I have been all alone ever since, and it's been horrid."

"I know," Pam agreed, "I felt lonely too, but Joy, I couldn't come out when he was here. He was so mean and I hate him, even if Pops says he took the only way to teach me to ride—and I can ride now, can't I?"

"Of course you can, and we'll ride this afternoon to the K. C. C., but oh! Pam,

I was so afraid you wouldn't make up."

"Silly," laughed Pam, gently, "I was lots more unhappy than you were, because it was all my fault; anyway Pops says it is, and that I ought to say I'm sorry to you, and Joe. I do say it to you because it's true; but I'll never speak to Joe again as long as I live."

"Oh, Pam, and he's my best boy friend, and he only did it the way he taught me too. Why, he teased me so the day I bumped my head that I went into Mother Ia's tent, and cried hard; but I forgave him because in the end he taught me to ride, and I'd have never learned if he'd been soft and easy with me."

"Well, I suppose that's true, but anyway I hate Joe, and so don't let's talk about him. Do you really think I could ride over to the Roots' this afternoon without falling off?"

"Oh, you'll never fall off again now," Joy assured her; "you know how to ride, you see."

"Then let's walk home, and ask Pops if we can go; won't Ted and Bob be surprised when they see us?" Pam was her own sunny self again.

Pops was not so sure of his daughter's ability to ride two miles on a pony that he did not know.

"I think I'll come along," he said; "I'd

like to see this K. C. C. in action. I have an idea that I played it when I was a boy."

Geoffrey Hotchkiss was a writer, and his time was pretty much his own; but he admitted to himself that this summer his work had been cut into more than he dared to think about; but he blamed it on the children and not on a certain white-haired lady of his acquaintance.

"But, Pops," Pam protested, "you aren't a member, and they might not let you in."

"Oh! don't worry about that; I'll beg a cup of tea from Mrs. Root, and you'll never know I'm there," he assured her.

Mrs. Payton, appealed to, said Joy might ride if Mr. Hotchkiss was going, and so at three o'clock they all set off for the Root place. Bob and Ted were wild with excitement when they saw them coming.

"Ponies!" Bob shouted; "and you never told us."

"We wanted to surprise you," Joy explained.

"Well, you did, all right," Ted replied.

"Gee, but you're in luck."

"You can ride Cricket as often as you like," Joy said to Bob; "and I know Pam will let Ted ride Clinker."

"I will, if you'll let me ride your wheel," Pam agreed.

"Let's ride them now," Bob suggested.

The exchange was made, and Bob and Ted were on the two ponies, while Pam and Joy mounted the bicycles.

Geoffrey Hotchkiss watched them, and smiled. What wonderful kids they were, and how he wished they were all his, especially Joy. That made him think of Flora, and by the time the door was opened and Mrs. Root came to greet him, he had a far away look in his usually humorous eyes.

"Ponies, as I live!" said Mrs. Root, "you wretch, come and make your peace with David, he's home, sick, and in a terrible mood; you're just the person to cheer him up."

David was Mr. Root and they found him sitting in the living-room completely surrounded by newspapers, and smoking a very strong pipe.

"Hello, Hotchkiss!" he said, cheerfully, "glad you've come. Conny has been pampering me all day; thinks I'm sick, which is ridiculous."

"Mr. Hotchkiss knows very well that no man can eat lemon pie before he goes to bed and not be sick the next morning," Mrs. Root

defended. "But you won't be so glad to see him when you hear the extent of his iniquity," she went on; "he has bought ponies for Pam and Joy, and our boys are green with envy."

"Villain!" exclaimed Mr. Root; "the twins will give me no peace; bicycles were bad enough, but ponies—man do you want to bankrupt me?"

"Never thought of that," Geoffrey confessed; "I suppose I'll have the whole neighborhood down on me, but after all why shouldn't you buy ponies for the twins; think what good times the four of them would have riding around the countryside."

"Very easy to talk. Here I am, a hard-working man who spends his time really working instead of squiring the handsomest woman in the county"—Geoffrey blushed—"and you go and buy ponies. Yah! and you call yourself a friend," and Mr. Root ended in a hearty laugh.

"Well, I can see nothing for it but ponies for the twins," put in Mrs. Root; "you'll have to make up your mind to it, Daddy."

"And what about Edna, my only daughter, she'd have to have one, too. Oh"—he broke off—"I see an endless chain. If Edna has a pony, what do you think Marcia Gordon would

do, and her father and mother; we'd lose our best friends; and there's all the Talcotts to be considered. Fred Talcott would never forgive me. No, the thing is out of the question. I'm a peaceful man, and I won't start, or rather continue this war that you have started."

"Stop," pleaded Geoffrey, "you make me feel a dreadful culprit; but now that I pause to think about it, ponies for the neighborhood would be the best thing for it."

"Perhaps you could steer Edna off with a promise of a car, when she's eighteen," suggested Mrs. Root, who really wanted the twins to have ponies.

"My Edna? I guess not; that's just like you, Ann, everything for the twins."

"They'd look so cute," sighed Mrs. Root.

Outside came an ear-splitting warwhoop. The Talcotts had arrived.

"Will wonders never cease, now that these two have joined our community?" Spruce began, "ponies; I ask you my friends, what next?"

"Oh, Joy, which is yours, and aren't they both the darlingest things that ever were; and oh, may I ride one some day; and—"

"Merry," Dandy began, and then added,

"well, babble on, child, I think the occasion demands it."

"Dandy," said Merry, wonderingly, "is impressed."

The Betts family arrived, followed by the two Lawford boys, who hoped Gloria had been induced to stay over for the meeting. Stephen Winthrop, as usual, came last.

"Ponies are out of date," he said laconically, "I wish I had a saxophone."

"Oh! don't let's play Kick the Can to-day," Merry began, "let's all take a ride on the ponies, and—"

"Merry," Spruce interrupted, "one outpouring is enough for one day. What do you want to do, kill the ponies?"

"Spruce, if you hush me I'll tell everybody what you said last night at dinner," Merry threatened.

"You do, and you'll find a watery grave down the well," but Spruce looked uncomfortable.

"Tell us, Merry; I dare you to," teased Stephen.

"No," said Merry, loyally, "I won't tell on him unless he hushes me again."

"I think it would be awfully nice for everybody to have a ride on our ponies," Joy said,

shyly, "but please let's have one game of Kick the Can, so Pam and I can learn how to play."

"Oh, yes, please," begged Pam.

"Of course we will, any time you like; it's very decent of you to let us ride, at all," Spruce said, gallantly; and Joy giggled.

"I choose first ride!" Ted cried, and then stopped. "Nope," he said, "I suppose the party being at our house it's ladies first."

"Let me ride first because I know how; I had a pony once," said Winny Betts; she was halfway down the drive when Marcia Gordon and Edna came out of the house arm in arm.

"Why, whose are they?" Edna demanded.

"The Sprites," Dandy told them. "I mean Pam's and Joy's but you'd think to see the crowd to-day that they were most anybody else's."

"My turn next, and oh! I'm so thrilled," Merry began, and she went off down the road with Spruce on one side and Dandy on the other; when she came back she was bubbling.

"Oh! Pam, was it your pony or Joy's that I rode? Anyway, it was just the sweetest thing in the world, and I did love it; and you will let me go again sometime on the one Marcia rode, and—"

"Merry," said Spruce and Dandy together, and then Spruce could have bitten out his tongue.

Merry looked horrified.

"Oh Spruce, now I have to tell, because I said I would, and I'm so sorry, but what can I do?"

"Tell," said Spruce, "you said you would," he added, gloomily.

Merry considered for a minute, and then she mumbled—

"HesaidPamwastheprettiestgirlintheplace."

"Ah! that's not fair," Stephen protested.

"Yes it is," Spruce insisted, "thanks, Merry."

"Clever kid," said Dandy proudly.

"And now let's play Kick the Can," said Jack Betts, who wished he could love his sister Winny as much as the Talcotts loved Merry, but couldn't somehow.

Kick the Can is an old-fashioned game, but lots of fun. Spruce counted out, and Stephen was It, and the rest chose Dandy to kick for them. A can was placed on the driveway and Dandy kicked it away off onto the lawn. Stephen shut his eyes and counted one hundred by ones, and the rest hid.

Ted and Bob took Joy and Pam with them

and they climbed up to the top of the garage, and lay flat on the sloping roof. Stephen looked everywhere for them, but could not find them so he went off a little ways to hunt the rest. Bob slipped down the water pipe, and kicked the can still further across the lawn. Then he scrambled back. No one found them, and they had to be called in.

Mrs. Root announced the refreshments, and they trooped to the dining-room. Edna slipped into the living-room.

"Dad," she said, after she had greeted Mr. Hotchkiss, "Pam and Joy have ponies, you know, and I think the twins ought to have them too, I just thought I'd tell you it would be all right with me to get them for them. You know," she said, turning to Geoffrey, "I'm going to have a car when I'm eighteen."

"That's my girl!" exclaimed Mr. Root, proudly; "isn't that beautiful?"

Mr. Hotchkiss laughed.

CHAPTER XXI

SARAH

SUMMER faded into Autumn, and the leaves on Joy's favorite birch trees turned a golden yellow. As the signs appeared that Winter was coming the thoughts of the children turned reluctantly to school.

Joy and Pam heard them talk, and were envious, so that Miss York noticed a decided improvement in the daily lesson.

If they could only go to Miss Lathrop's school with Ted and Bob; but for the present this was out of the question. Miss York spoke of Christmas and the second term; but Christmas seemed ages away. Well, they would see the boys after school every day, and there were always vacations. The Root twins were being extra well behaved, for there was a whisper of ponies in the air. In fact the whole neighborhood was talking about it.

One morning in early September Joy and Pam were in Pam's playroom now called the study.

"Let's go down to the Forest of Arden and see Merry and Spruce and Dandy," Pam suggested; "I'll go tell Sniffs."

She went down the hall and without knocking pushed open the door of Miss York's sitting room.

"Why Sniffs, whatever is the matter?" she demanded, stopping just inside the room, for Miss York was lying face down on her bed and her shoulders were shaking convulsively.

"Oh! nothing, nothing," she cried, trying to stop her tears. "I'll be all right in a minute." Go away, dear, and leave me just for a little," she pleaded.

Pam tiptoed out, and closed the door. She found Joy boxing with Soncy.

"Joy, stop, something awful must have happened to Sniffs, she is crying terribly hard; what'll I do?" Pam demanded, frightened.

Joy considered, then she said gravely:

"I don't know; Sniffs never cries; we'd better tell somebody."

"Pops," said Pam, and they went down on tiptoe to the library.

Geoffrey Hotchkiss turned a bewildered face to them and shook his head in despair.

"What can I do?" he asked hopelessly, "it needs a woman to interfere."

"I know—Mummy," said Joy, "I'll run and tell her."

"No, I'll telephone her," Mr. Hotchkiss replied, "perhaps she can come at once."

Flora said she would be there as soon as she could walk across the short cut, and she was as good as her word.

Mr. Hotchkiss met her at the door.

"Flora, you are all out of breath," he said.

"Where is poor Miss York, and what is the trouble?" Flora demanded.

"Upstairs in her sitting room, and the children say she is crying very hard. Of course the dear lady has a perfect right to cry if she likes, but if she's unhappy, and I can do anything, I want to; you'll tell her that, won't you, Flora?"

"Of course, and now let me go to her; if she's just having a good cry I'll leave her."

Flora went upstairs and knocked gently on the door of Miss York's room. A muffled "come in" answered her.

Miss York was still on the bed, and she was still crying.

"Dear Miss York, is there any way I can help?" Flora asked.

"No one can help now, and she'll have to go to a home," Miss York sobbed out incoherently.

Flora found a handkerchief, soaked it in *eau de cologne*, and bathed Miss York's forehead.

"Who has to go to a home, and where?" she asked, patiently.

At the unaccustomed thought of having some one else wait on her Miss York sat up. Poor woman, she had served all her life, and she did not know how to be served herself.

"Oh! please Mrs. Payton, don't bother," she begged, stifling her sobs. "I'll be all right soon."

"But you must tell me what is troubling you," Flora insisted; and by and by the story came out.

Miss York had received a telegram that morning with news that her brother was dead and the mortgage due on the farm and asking her what she wanted done with her little niece, Sarah.

"She hasn't a relative in the world but me, and there's no money except my salary, so the child will have to go to some home; and oh! Mrs. Payton, I was once in a home, and I know how dreadful they are."

"Not all of them, my dear," Flora comforted; "but of course your little niece can't go to one; she must be with you. You dry your eyes, and I'll think up some way; but of course you must go home at once. When you come back we will have thought up some solution. Bring Sarah back with you."

"Oh! Mrs. Payton," began Miss York, but Flora put her hand on her lips.

"Not a word of thanks; think how much you have done for my Joy," she said.

"And now Geoffrey we must think of some really nice way out of this," she began, when she had driven Miss York to the station and returned to the Hotchkiss' for lunch.

Geoffrey groaned.

"I suppose you mean I am to open my house to this poor child and take her in," he said.

"No," replied Flora, slowly, "I don't think that; it would be asking too much; but there must be another way out. You think and I'll think, and children, you think too."

They ate in silence for a few minutes, and then Pam announced that she had an idea.

"Let's invite Sniffs to live in the gardener's cottage and we can go to school to her there, and maybe some other people would go to

school to her too, and, well that's all." She turned eager eyes to her father.

"I believe the child has struck the right solution," Geoffrey laughed.

"Pam, darling, it's a wonderful idea!" Flora exclaimed. "We'll fix it up for her, and perhaps in time she can have a little school."

"There goes my plan of having the cottage turned into a studio," sighed Geoffrey; "but anything to save a child to her one remaining relative;" he spoke lightly, but they knew he meant what he said.

"Let's go down this afternoon and look through it and I will see about the furniture," suggested Mrs. Payton.

"You will have all the fun, you mean," teased Geoffrey, "well, come along."

They inspected the gardener's cottage from its solid little cellar to its tiny attic, and Mrs. Payton led them all back to her barn, where they found some old furniture that looked as if it had been made to Miss York's order.

The next two days the girls spent in a flurry of excitement. The furniture for Sarah's room was painted white and one of the Hotchkiss guest rooms was denuded of hangings, so that the curtains could be blue.

Miss York's room was furnished in curly

maple, and the little sitting room was fitted entirely with the furniture used in her old room. This was Mr. Hotchkiss' donation.

Bridget had an important time furnishing the kitchen, and Jane was everywhere in evidence.

The morning of the third day the last touches were ready, even to the books on Sarah's reading table by her bed.

"Oh! if she doesn't like it, I'll simply die," Pam exclaimed.

"If we only knew how old Sarah really was, we'd know better what to put in her room. Maybe she plays with dolls," Joy said.

"Well, I have a doll somewhere; let's find it, and put it on her bed," Pam suggested. "I hate dolls myself," she added.

"So do I, but I have an idea that Sniff's niece will like them," Joy replied.

They found the doll, and discovered that Soncy had chewed off one foot, so they had to dress her in long clothes. This meant laundering them, which was rather a lark, especially when Pam scorched the petticoat.

When the doll was placed on the bed, they decided to go and call on the Colonel and tell him all the news.

"Bless us, another Sniffs," was his com-

ment; "but of course," he added, "I am sorry to hear of the poor soul's misfortune; let me send over some flowers for the rooms."

"Oh, and I'll pick them!" Joy exclaimed. "I love your garden, and I know Sniffs adores asters."

When the flowers were arranged, it was time to meet the train and Pam and Joy crowded into the front seat beside Patrick, and Flora sat alone in the back of the car. Geoffrey refused to go.

The train pulled in, and Miss York stepped gingerly down to the ground, followed by a thin little girl who from her height would have been about ten but whose face looked many years older for it was very grave and careworn.

She smiled a wistful smile as she shook hands, and was a little timid about getting into the car. The girls didn't know exactly what to say to her.

"Do you like dogs?" Pam began.

Sarah nodded, "oh yes," she whispered.

"And horses?" asked Joy.

"Oh yes," a little louder.

Pam looked at her hopelessly, "well, do you like us?" she demanded.

"Oh *yes*," came the eager reply.

Miss York was speechless about the house; she just stood in the middle of it and gasped. She absolutely refused at first to believe that it was really hers.

"Let's take Sarah over to the Colonel's, and get him to nickname her for us. He always chooses such nice nicknames," Pam suggested.

"Oh! I'd better stay and help Aunt Ann," Sarah replied to the invitation.

"Not to-night, dear child," said Mrs. Payton, kindly; "Jane is coming down to help get the dinner. We thought you'd rather be alone the first night," she added to Miss York.

When the Colonel saw Sarah, he looked at her for just a second; and then he said; "why she's just a whisper."

"Whisper is a lovely nickname!" Pam exclaimed. "Sarah," she asked doubtfully, "will you like being called Whisper?"

"Oh, yes," agreed Sarah, in a whisper.

CHAPTER XXII

CONCLUSION

THAT night Joy and her mother sat in the living-room and talked until late.

"Joy, dear, have you been happy this summer?" Flora asked, as she pulled Joy down to the arm of her chair.

"Oh! yes, Mummy, I've been awfully happy, and the best part of it is that I am going to be lots happier every year," Joy replied, kissing her mother's forehead.

"What do you mean, darling?"

"Why, the twins will get ponies, and think of the fun we will have; and then there is Whisper to make happy; and, oh! Mummy, there will be larks at school. And of course there is always Pam, and once a year there will be Joe."

"And you're sure you're happier with me than you were with the gypsies?"

"Positive, I'm so happy, Mummy, that if I was any happier I think I'd burst. Say you're happy, too."

"Of course I am; and now darling off to bed with you, so that you will be bright and fresh for the next adventure."

THE END

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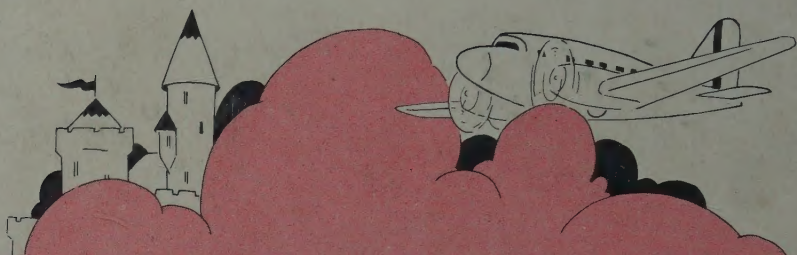
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